THE RELIGIOUS QUEST OF INDIA

THE CONCEPT OF MĀYĀ

P. D DEVANANDAN

Y.M.C.A. PUBLISHING HOUSE
5, RUSSELL STREET, CALCUTTA
1954

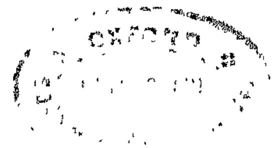
THIS study aims to make an historical survey of the growth and development of the doctrine of Māyā in Hindu religious thought. From an analysis of the meaning-content of the word as used in the Vedas, an attempt is made to work back and trace in the mind of pre-Vedic India the original germ of thought, the māyā-plasm.

The genesis of the idea of Māyā, then, takes us past the whole of the Vedic literature on to the Upanishads, the fountain-heads of all Hindu thought of later times.

Māyā is an accepted term of classical orthodoxy as we enter the scholastic period of Hindu philosophy. Of the six famous Hindu Darsanas (schools of philosophy), the Vedānta provides the kind of metaphysical monism to which the māyā view of the world is a complement. From the scholastic period the study is confined to the Vedānta.

The findings of the investigations are brought together in four main sections in the last chapter: first the history of the *word* Māyā; second, the history of the *doctrine* in a brief outline sketch and thirdly, the significance of associating the word with the doctrine. The fourth section deals with modern trends of thought in present-day Hinduism as they relate to the concept of Māyā.

Price
Rs. 4



THE CONCEPT OF MĀYĀ

LUTTERWORTH LIBRARY, Vol. XXXI
Missionary Research Series, No. 13

This book is one of the books published under the auspices of the Department of Missions, Selly Oak Colleges

THE CONCEPT OF MĀYĀ

An essay in historical survey of the Hindu theory of the world, with special reference to the Vedānta

by

PAUL DAVID DEVANANDAN





LUTTERWORTH PRESS
LONDON

First Published 1950

Printed in Great Britain by
UNWIN BROTHERS LIMITED, WOKING AND LONDON

PREFACE

This study was originally undertaken in Yale University Graduate School, under the direction of Profs. J. C. Archer and F. Edgerton. It was subsequently accepted as a dissertation in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Ph.D. in the University.

In presenting it to a wider public the writer is not unaware of the limitations of the undertaking; in a sense, they are inevitable. To have gone fully into all the ramifications of the doctrine of Māyā in the entire history of the development of Hindu thought and life, right down to present times, would have involved a much longer treatise.

Within the compass of a single volume, he has attempted to present what seem to him the most striking and salient features of a world-view that has puzzled the minds of many non-Hindu students of religion; a world-view which in India itself has passed through considerable vicissitudes of speculation, being subject to-day in that country to a revolutionary re-statement, in the realm of religious practice more than in that of religious theory.

The writer is deeply indebted to many scholars, both Hindu and non-Hindu. Wherever possible he has acknowledged his indebtedness; though it has not always been possible to give individual credit to the innumerable authors on whose authority he has frequently relied for interpretation and support.

The volume is included in the series of Missionary Research Studies issued under the auspices of the Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham, mainly through the efforts of Prof. G. E. Phillips. To him, to Dr. Edward Cadbury, who by founding the William Paton Lectureship enabled the writer to spend nearly two academic years in the Selly Oak Colleges, and to his other colleagues on the staff in Selly Oak, for their kindly encouragement and genial friendship throughout his stay in their midst, he desires to express his special gratitude.

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INTRODUCTORY

Many reasons are offered for the characteristic indifference of the Hindu to what the Occidental calls the adventure of Life. The enervating climate of the tropics, the relative poverty of India's natural resources, and, of late, even the "satanic" British Raj come in for their share of blame in making the Hindu indifferent to the world. All this may be true. But account must also be taken of the Hindu dogmatic theory that for generations has developed in the Hindu's innermost being a firm conviction that life is evanescent, that the world is a delusion: it is all Māyā.

The doctrine of Māyā is primarily a fundamental tenet of the Advaita (non-dualistic) school of Vedānta philosophy. Śaṅkara elaborated a systematic exposition of the tenets of that school in the eighth century of our era, and set forth this particular doctrine as central to the Advaita teaching. As such, it is held by the modern Vedāntin in India. It is still regarded as the authoritative pronouncement of Hindu orthodoxy about the nature of Ultimate Reality and the world of experience.

Essentially, Māyā stands for the illusory character of world-life, of the empirical universe when regarded from the standpoint of metaphysical reality. What is real is the Self, and that alone. The moment one experiences the Self as the sole reality, the phenomenal world of sense-perceptions not only comes to have no validity, it ceases to exist. For the individual ego (Purusha Ātman) would then be merged in the static perfection of the Self (Parama Ātman), since that alone exists. Logically, it should follow that everything other than the Self is not. But yet what is other than Self exists—relatively! For all practical purposes, the world of sense-experience is real. The philosophic exposition of this *mystery* of the world, of life, of its essential "undemonstrable, unspeakable and indefinite" nature, is the doctrine of Māyā in Advaita Vedānta.

Māyā is also a *religious* tenet. Māyā is accorded a recognized place in the religious creed of the Vedāntin, as also in that of the Vishṇuite. In Śakti cults particularly, and quite generally in all forms of popular Hinduism, both ancient and modern, we find the idea more or less. Even to-day, the unlettered village seer, steeped in the religious traditions of his Hindu forbears, and the cultured cosmopolitan interpreter of India's religious heritage, both frequently refer to the world around them as Māyā. The Hindu scholiast apart, the religious idea of the world as a baffling "mystery" persists in India.

The fact is, in India, Religion and Philosophy coalesce. The religious man is not content till he has thought it through; and

the philosopher is primarily animated by the religious motive to seek and find eternity. "To our minds", says a Western student of the Upanishads, " 'philosophy' implies a search for abstract truth about the nature of the universe and man's place in it, as an end in itself. We do not expect a philosopher to do anything with this truth, if and when he gets it, except to enjoy the intellectual pleasure of cognizing it, and to share it with others. If practical motives are concerned, we say it is no longer 'pure' philosophy, but religion or something else. But to the Hindu, even of later classical times, and *a fortiori* of the Vedic age, such a conception never occurred. . . . Abstract truth for its own sake, as an end in itself, never for a moment has been conceived by Indian philosophers as a proper objective for their speculations."[1] Salvation, *Mukti* or *Moksha* is the sole end of all Hindu speculations. Their interest in the nature of life in this world, as such, is subsidiary to this main objective. For this reason alone, if for no other, Indian philosophic speculation is weighted down by the letter of the Scripture and the authority of the sages.

Religion, in its comprehensive sense, as including magic, crude mystery cults, and highly developed mysticism, and Philosophy as primarily a pursuit for "religious knowledge", *vidyā*, form a tangled skein in the extant religious literature of India, with diverse threads looping and inter-looping in glorious riot and free abandon. Many threads of quite serious speculation, meshed up and broken half short, still hang on, loosely clinging to the ancient web of Indian religious thought. Crossing and recrossing they form patterns within patterns which to our modern minds convey different meanings from that which they conveyed to the seers of long ago, when the whole web was less intricate.

Picking up one single thread like the doctrine of Māyā, and trying to pull it loose is no easy task. It has been woven into so many different patterns at different periods of India's religious history that at times it becomes well-nigh unrecognizable as the same thread. Nevertheless, we shall endeavour, in these pages, to trace the full length of the thread to its very beginning, to the very borderland of "primitive" consciousness where incipient religion, embryonic "philosophic" speculation, and magic are yet in the process of being differentiated.

This study aims to make an historical survey of the growth and development of the doctrine of Māyā in Hindu religious speculation—strictly Hindu in that we avoid entering into Buddhist and other heterodox systems of the contemporary thought of the

[1] F. Edgerton, *The Upanishads: What do they Seek, and Why? J.O.A.S.*, vol. 49, No. 2, p. 101, cf. Monier Williams, *Brahmanism and Hinduism*, London, 1891, p. 26.

times. The method of approach is historico-critical. Therefore, in the evaluation of the dogma at various stages of its development, we shall endeavour to avoid all apologetic, either Hindu or non-Hindu. Since this is primarily an objective study of the *history* of a religious doctrine, our conclusions shall be based on the findings of our historical investigation of the growth and development of the Hindu world-view, and not on any examination of dogmatic content.

Each chapter is prefaced with a brief characterization of the literature used as source-material for the period dealt with. We seek to discover in the literature of the period the idea of the world and the contemporary notion of Reality. For Māyā has two facets—the world, negatively: and God or Reality, positively.

At the end of each chapter we evaluate the ideas of the world and of God thus discussed in their relation to the classical doctrine of māyā.

The original meaning-content of the word māyā in Hindu religious literature provides the starting-point of our investigation. With this end in view, we consider the passages in which the term māyā is used in the Vedas, the earliest Hindu religious records we possess. From an analysis of the meaning-content of the word as used in the Vedas, we attempt to work back and trace in the mind of pre-Vedic India the original germ of thought, the māyā-plasm. Here we draw largely upon historical imagination, guided by the findings of anthropological investigation in the general field of primitive religion and culture. This is not laying undue emphasis on origins. All beginnings are significant: and, in this case especially, as there are obvious indications of a more than superficial relation in the meaning-content of māyā in early Indian thought to the *mana* concept of other peoples at a similar, rudimentary stage in religious genesis: an observation by no means unimportant to the student of comparative religions and primitive culture.

We ask ourselves next whether the original meaning of the term bears any relation at all to the meaning the term māyā later acquires in classical Hinduism. The study of the word māyā thus leads us to that of the *idea* it is meant to convey—the history of the doctrine of māyā.

What germ of thought gave birth to the doctrine as such? Where did the notion of māyā as specifically referring to the world of sense-experience first make its appearance in Hindu religious literature? We do find vague cosmological speculations in the last book of the Ṛig Veda. But whether or not they could have been the basis for the doctrine of Māyā is open to question.

As we have seen, it affirms that the world is an illusion, an appearance, on the one hand: on the other hand, it maintains the reality of the Ātman (self) alone. The negation of the universe of sense-perception is directed towards an affirmation of the sole and supreme reality of the contra-sensual Self. In other words, the negative formula of Māyā conveys a positive truth, that of the sole reality of the Ātman.

Which of these facets of this two-fold idea first dawned on the consciousness of the Hindu thinker, and how? Was it because of the reality of the Self that the conclusion as to the unreality or otherwise of the phenomenal world was reached? Or, was it because of the unreality of the world of sensible phenomena having been first established, that the sole reality of the Ātman was proved?

The genesis of the idea of Māyā, then, takes us past the whole Vedic literature of the Saṁhitās, the Brāhmaṇas and the Āraṇyakas on to the Upanishads, the fountain-head of all Hindu thought of later times. The value of the Upanishads as source-material for our study is inestimable. All later Hindu thought harks back to them not only for inspiration but for authority. We find that the *naïveté* of the Indian solution of the problem of the universe still persists in the Upanishads, alongside of the flashes of insight into the nature of Reality gained by gifted individual thinkers.

After making a careful study of the growth of the idea of Māyā in the Upanishads, both from the standpoint of its "mystic" quest for liberation and as it is reflected intermittently in the thought of individual ṛishis, we come to the Heroic Age of Indian tradition, the era of the Epics. Popular religion clashes with Brahmanic orthodoxy, and the battle of ideas results in a series of compromises which provides the basic foundations for the composite fabric of modern Hinduism.

In the great epic, the Mahābhārata, the word Māyā has the *popular* meaning of delusion caused by magical power, the *religious* meaning of the mysterious workings of God's *śakti*, creative energy, and only the faintest suggestion of the *philosophic* connotation it later acquires. Thenceforth these three strands become visibly extricated from the original meaning of "power". Wedded to the popular theism of the Epics, Māyā, as śakti, is personalized, and the Śakti cults assume importance and even gain the sanction of orthodoxy, especially in Śaivism.

In the speculative sections of the Gītā, which is an appendix to the Mahābhārata, we find the early beginnings of the Māyā of later day Hindu philosophy. The Hindu idea of the world, based on the Brahmanic monism of the Upanishads, is here

taking form. The main thread of development, however, runs through the Brahma Sūtra of Bādarāyaṇa and the Kārikās of Gauḍapāda. The theism of the former emphasizes the avidyā-aspect, māyā as significant from the standpoint of religious epistemology, māyā as the all-pervasive veil of ignorance that blinds men to the Being in this world of Becoming. The rigorous logic of the latter commits Gauḍapāda to an idealism which seeks to explain the world as an appearance, that is from the standpoint of cosmology. This dynamic world of change is necessarily Māyā, illusion, because ultimate Reality is static, characteristically unmoved, absolute perfection.

Māyā is an accepted term of classical orthodoxy as we enter the scholastic period of Hindu philosophy. Of the six famous Hindu Darśanas (schools of philosophy), the Vedānta provides the kind of metaphysical monism to which the māyā view of the world is a complement. We therefore confine our study to the Vedānta from the scholastic period on.

Śāṅkara (A.D. 788–850), the founder of the school of Kevalādvaita (pure monism or non-duality), basing his teachings on the Brahma Sūtras of Bādarāyaṇa and appealing for authority to the Upanishads, gave classical currency to the Māyā doctrine of Vedānta. His interpretation of Māyā and his exposition of Vedāntic monism occupies our attention in the fifth chapter of our study.

Rāmānuja (A.D. 1050–1157), the founder of the theistic school of *Viśishṭādvaita* (Monism or non-duality with a difference) and his interpretation of the Sūtras of Bādarāyaṇa is dealt with in the sixth chapter. Rāmānuja challenges Śaṅkara's idealistic world of Māyā. His religious experience of God as personal Being revolts against Śaṅkara's Absolute. True, Śaṅkara generously offers a personal God (Īśvara) to empiric consciousness; but, after all, that God is as unreal as the world of Māyā! When the empiric consciousness wakes up to the knowledge (*vidyā*) of the sole reality of the Brahman (the paramātman), Īśvara also, along with the world of sense-perceptions, vanishes into thin air. No, says Rāmānuja, the world is no more Māyā than God is. And he gives an interpretation of Māyā reconciling, in a way, the world and God.

Śaṅkara's school, however, was not convinced. The theistic Rāmānujites and the monistic Śaṅkarites henceforth have a lively time. Controversy rages round the divergent interpretations of the fundamental tenet of Vedānta—the doctrine of māyā. A comparative study of the vicissitudes of interpretation given this doctrine of the world by these two important schools of Vedānta is briefly presented in the seventh chapter.

What does māyā signify to the modern Hindu thinker? The impact of Western culture, the study of modern philosophy, the influence of religious thought other than Indian, are by no means negligible factors in the modern Hindu's interpretation of the māyā doctrine. The discoveries of modern sciences are enlisted to interpret māyā as "Cosmic Energy",[1] "The World as power-reality."[2] The Absolute Idealism of a previous generation of German thinkers is hailed as spiritual kin to Vedāntic *paravidyā* ("higher knowledge"). Mohammedan Sūfism and Christian Mysticism have played no mean part in evoking a statement such as this: "Some . . . maintain that the Brahma of India is a mere abstraction, a negation of all that is in the world. In a word, that the Infinite Being is to be found nowhere except in metaphysics. It may be that such a doctrine has been and still is prevalent with a section of our countrymen. But this is certainly not in accord with the pervading spirit of the Indian mind. Instead, it is the practice of realizing and affirming the presence of the Infinite in all things."[3] How far after all are such interpretations of neo-Hinduism removed from the original exposition of the doctrine? The world, said Śaṅkara, is Māyā because from the standpoint of Śruti (revelation)[4] it is *tucca* (fictitious); from the standpoint of *yukti* (discursive reasoning) it is *anirvacanīya* (not to be explained in words, inexplicable); and from the standpoint of *laukīka bodha* ("world-mindedness", practical reasoning) it is to be sure, *vāstavi* (real).[5]

The findings of our investigations are brought together in four main sections in the last chapter: first, the history of the *word* Māyā; second, the history of the *doctrine* in a brief outline sketch; and thirdly, the significance of associating the word with the doctrine. If we are justified in concluding that pre-Vedic Māyā is a local variant of the scientific category of Mana, then, at least in the history of one major culture, we have tangible evidence of the growth and development of this primitive concept. Along one line it leads to popular magic and magic that is semi-religious; in another direction it culminates in Tantrik Śāktism (Energy cults) and crude Mysteries developing the idea of a "personal" God; and for a third, it gives birth to the absolute idealism of the Vedānta and the lofty mysticism of the Vishṇuite, but at the heavy cost of undermining the independent reality of the world.

[1] Article in *Modern Review*, September 1931, on the "Prophet of Potsdam" (Einstein), anonymous, vol. l, 3, pp. 269 ff.

[2] Woodroffe and Mukhopadhyaya, *The World as Power-Reality*, Madras, 1924.

[3] R. Tagore, *Sadhana*, New York, 1916, p. 16.

[4] Or better, Religious Realism.

[5] Panchadāsi, Chitradīpa, 6, translated, A. Venis, Benares, 1883–86. Quoted by M. S. Tripath, *Vedanta Philosophy*, Bombay, 1901, p. 106.

In presenting these conclusions, a certain amount of repetition was found unavoidable. The fourth section deals with modern trends of thought in present-day Hinduism which all go to show that a re-statement of the Hindu view of the world, fundamentally at variance with Upanishadic orthodoxy, is in the making; that the Christian contribution is most relevant in such "re-creation".

CHAPTER I

THE WELTANSCHAUUNG OF THE VEDAS

I

A SURVEY OF VEDIC SOURCE-MATERIAL

"The Ṛig Veda", says Śrī Aurobindo Ghosh, "is itself the one considerable document that remains to us from the early period of human thought . . . when the spiritual and psychological knowledge of the race was concealed, for reasons now difficult to determine, in a veil of concrete and material figures and symbols which prohibited the sense from the profane and revealed it to the initiated. This wisdom was, they thought, unfit for, perhaps, even dangerous to, the ordinary human mind. Hence they favoured the existence of the outer worship, effective but imperfect, for the profane, and an inner discipline for the initiate, and clothed their language in words and images which had equally a spiritual sense for the mass of ordinary worshippers."[1]

Such, invariably, is typical of the attitude of the religious interpreter of the earliest records of Brahmanic wisdom, the Vedas, prejudiced by the dogma of revelation, in some form or another. The purely philological investigator, on the other hand, is equally handicapped by the tyranny of the word and the inflexion. To him the ultimate criterion is the letter: the cast of the word and the structure of the sentence give the final sanction to the sense. In either case, the tendency is to draw conclusions from partial data.

The religious enthusiasm of the commentator who is committed to a belief in the inspiration of the scriptures might well profit by the hard-headed scepticism of the academic linguist's critical approach. But at all events their abstract findings need to be correlated to actual conditions of life which obtained in Vedic India. This "humanizing" attitude of historical imagination needs to be emphasized in our approach to the source material of our study.

Vedic India was still "primitive"; in the sense of being nearer the line of demarcation between Man the animal and Man the animal-plus.[2] The Vedic Aryan immigrant, considerably influenced, and not a little fused racially with the aboriginal Dravidian,[3] was

[1] Aurobindo Ghosh, *Arya*, Pondicherry, 1924, vol. i, p. 60

[2] The word "primitive" is used in this sense throughout. It has no derogatory implication at all.

[3] Like the term "Aryan", "Dravidian" is linguistic rather than ethnic; here used to include all non-Aryans.

still in the childhood of the race. His mind was still in the making; so also his society, government and religion. His religion was centred round the ritual sacrifice, in which the hymns of the Veda came to serve the purpose of ritualistic liturgy. What we would know of Vedic theology, philosophy and the "mores", we have to discover by getting behind the words of these hymns into the life and thought of the times that inspired them. This is by no means an easy task, however.

The unsystematic treatment of ideas about gods, sacrifices and of religion in general, which we find in these hymns, obviously represents divergent lines of thought, characteristic of various stages of growth. Vedic religion is neither all magic nor priest-craft; neither all polytheism nor polydemonism; not all worship of the One. It is really inclusive [illegible]s, not altogether unrelated nor yet noticeably correlated; but all characteristic of the primitive mind, of child humanity, in a rudimentary stage of religious consciousness. The Vedic hymns, nevertheless, are of incalculable value, because "they contain the rudiments of a far higher species of thought than these early poets could have dreamt of; thought, which in its way, and along its particular avenue, has become final for all times in India, and even outside of India".[1] We may regard them as crude allegories, obscure myths or immature compositions. But we dare not brush them aside as such. For they are the source of the later religious sects and philosophies of the Indo-Aryans, and without a study of them it is impossible to have a proper understanding of subsequent thought developments in Hindu religious theory and practice. On th[illegible] Hindu interpreters are agreed. As one of them states: "Vedic philosophy supplied abundantly rich food for later Indian thought, so much so, indeed, that subsequent Indian philosophy might be viewed as a mere systematic carrying out of the general plan of a structure, tacitly implied and imperfectly conceived" in the Vedas.[2]

There are four Vedas: The Ṛig, the Yajur, the Sāma, and the Atharva. All of them are collections of hymns and sacrificial formulae used in the ritual of the times. The Ṛig Veda contains the earliest collection of these hymns, when the sacrifice was still largely a personal act of devotion, not committed to the complete control and direction of any privileged priesthood. In course of time, however, the ritual became more and more formal and rigid in character, till it finally came to be regarded as consisting

[1] M. Bloomfield, *The Religion of the Vedas*, Putnam, New York, 1908, p. 63.

[2] D. M. Barua, *Pre-Buddhistic Indian Philosophy*, University of Calcutta, 1921, p. 7.

chiefly of strictly and minutely regulated ritualistic acts. Consequently, the verses which were to be quoted at certain points in the sacrifice were fixed, as also were formulae of words intended to accompany each particular movement. These sacrificial formulae received the name *Yajus* (from the root *Yaj*, to sacrifice). The Yajur Veda is a compilation of these formulae.[1] A different spirit permeated the Atharva. Here we find superstitious charms and exorcisms, together with abstract speculations such as we come upon in the later section of the Ṛig Veda hymns.

Besides the Mantras (Saṁhitās, collections of hymns), each Veda consists of Brāhmaṇas and Āraṇyakas also. The voluminous Brāhmaṇas are treatises in prose, analogous to the Hebrew Talmud. And each of them contains, in turn, two distinguishable groups of material:[2] *vidhi*, or rules on the performance of particular rites, as to what the priest should do and say; *arthavāda*, or quasi-philosophical explanations which foreshadow the later classical *darśanas*. The Āraṇyakas after giving descriptions of sacrificial ceremonies, tend to philosophize, rather fantastically, on the allegorical and symbolical meaning of the rites. They may be regarded as bridges which connected the way of works (karma mārga) [illegible] knowledge (jñāna mārga) across the river of Magic. Because, by the time we come to the end of the Āraṇyakas, we are already breathing the atmosphere of speculation, which at first, in the early Upanishads, is murky with magic. But, as we come to the Upanishads, the Vedānta, "the end of the Vedas", the magico-philosophy is rarefied into highly abstruse speculations about the fundamentals of religion.

Many conjectures have been made about the date of the Vedas, but we shall have to admit that we do not yet have sufficient evidence to reach any definite conclusion. Tilak dates the hymns about 4500 B.C. Jacobi suggests 3500 B.C. Radhakrishnan ventures fifteenth century B.C. as reasonable. Max Müller, Berriedale Keith and Washburn Hopkins favour dates between 1200 B.C. and 800 B.C. Bloomfield prefers to maintain a discreet silence. But this we know, that the earliest of the Vedas is the Ṛig. And therefore, as the earliest source-material at our disposal, it furnishes the starting-point of our investigation.

[1] Cf. W. D. Whitney, *A.O.S. Proceedings*, vol. iii, p. 304.

[2] K. S. Macdonald, *The Brahmanas of the Vedas*, C.L.S., London, 1901, pp. 42 ff. To these are added: *Ninda*, the censure of actions and opinions not consistent with the Vedic religion; *śaṁsa*, which is the opposite of *Ninda*, the praise of the knowledge of "he who knows" (ya evam veda); *puru-kalpa*, and *prakriti*, both of which include legends concerning gods and stories about renowned priests.

2

MĀYĀ IN THE ṚIG VEDA

In the Ṛig Veda, the word māyā, in one form or another, occurs no less than a hundred and two times. In his masterly analytical concordance, *Woerterbuch zum Rig-Veda*, Hermann Grossmann has cited sixty-three instances where the word occurs, and thirty-nine other instances where its derivatives are noted. Its use in the Vedas has been further analysed by Bergaigne in his volumes on the Vedic Religion.[1] Including the Atharva Veda in his survey, Hillebrandt[2] has also made a study of māyā as employed by the Vedic poets. Prof. P. D. Shastri[3] has also enumerated the various passages in the Ṛig Veda where the word occurs in many forms.

In many instances the word is used in the Veda to denote the wiles, the trickery, the malign "power" of the demons, or more generally of the enemies of men and of gods attacked by Agni (V, 2, 9; VII, 1, 10; VIII, 23, 15), by Soma (V, 48, 3), by Śarasvati (VI, 61, 3), but above all by Indra (I, 32, 4; 33, 10; 53, 7; 54, 4; 56, 3; II, 11, 5; 9 and 10; III, 34, 3; IV, 16, 9; V, 31, 7; 40, 6; VI, 18, 9; 20, 4; 22, 6 and 9; VIII, 3, 19; 14; X, 74, 3 and 7; III, 6; 138, 3) who thus captures Soma. In VII, 99, 4, it is associated with Vishṇu in his adventure against the evil power of the dasyu Vṛishaśpra.

Those men or beings who resorted to wicked ruses or evil craftiness are specifically designated as māyin (I, 39, 2; III, 30, 15; VIII, 23, 15). The Yātudhāna who in the form of a man and of a woman causes evil through māyā (sorcery) is referred to Indra as a righteous victim for his wrath (VIII, 104, 24). Perhaps the māyā and the māyin referred to in X, 71, 5, an . III, 56, 1, allude to the magical practices or prowess of mortals, *martyasya māyinaḥ*. This power, the human māyā, is definitely stated as incapable of prevailing against the "primordial" and immutable "laws of the gods". (III, 56, 1).

Not only do the gods overpower the māyā of demonic and human adversaries; but in their encounter with them they themselves resort to māyā. For the gods also possess it, or have access to it. It seems to be one of their attributes. It is through māyā that the Aśvins annihilate the māyā of the wicked dasyu (I, 117, 3), and Soma (VI, 24, 22) triumphs over the māyā of his crafty father. The Māruts, who, to a certain extent, shared the terrible character

[1] A. Bergaigne, *Religion Vedique*, Paris, 1878–83, vol. iii, p. 80 f.

[2] A. Hillebrandt, *Māyā, Weiner Zeitschrift Kunde des Morgenlandes*, 1899, vol. xiii, pp. 316–20.

[3] P. D. Shastri, *The Doctrine of Māyā*, Luzac, 1911.

of their father Rudra, also used māyā (V, 63, 6) They receive the epithet Māyin (I, 64, 7; V, 58, 2; cf. VI, 48, 14; also V, 48, 1, in which the epithet māyini indicates, perhaps, Rodhasi, the confederate of the Māruts).

The māyā of the gods may be either malignant or beneficent. It is a power they exercise for good or evil. Sometimes this is made clear by the prefix *dur* (evil) or *su* (good) added to the term, māyā. The Māruts, for instance, are alluded to as *sumāyā* in I, 88, 1, and I, 167, 2. The māyā of Mitra and Varuṇa is also of the same kind (I, 151, 9; III, 61, 7) or of Varuṇa alone (V, 85, 5 and 6; VIII, 41, 3 and 8).

What is more significant is that the māyā of the numerous māyins are united in Agni (III, 20, 3). Not only Soma receives the epithet māyin in VII, 82, 3, but so do the persons who produce Agni or Soma (I, 160, 3; V, 44, 11). Even the earthly sacrificers become māyin or māyavān (I, 159, 4; IX, 83, 3). And the Ribhus by the power of Māyā, raise themselves to the dignity of gods (III, 60, 1).

Specific reference is also made in some passages to the effects produced by the exercise of the power of māyā. Allan is inclined to believe that these are the germs of the later meaning the word acquired in Hindu thought.[1] Indra "assumes form after form, working māyās about his body" (III, 53, 8)..He "through māyā, goeth in many forms" (VI, 47, 18, cf. also III, 38, 7). Sun and Moon succeed each other in virtue of māyā (X, 85, 18), and māyā explains the double form of Pushan and Agni (VI, 58, 1; X, 88, 6). Perhaps most significant of all is the passage X, 54, 2: "When thou didst go, Indra waxing in body, speaking mighty things among folk, Māyā was that which they called thy battles; neither now nor hitherto hast thou found a foe."

In the Atharva, the word is associated with the Asura (VIII, 10, 22). Luck in gambling is invoked by the aid of māyā (IV, 38, 3). There is also a reference to the "black snake" assuming wondrous forms (vapus) "by the Asuras' māyā" (VI, 72, 1). Māyā seems to have some vague cosmological significance also because the sun and moon are supposed to follow one another by māyā (VII, 71, 1; cf. XIII, 2, 1). And also, by māyā the sun makes "the two days" i.e. day and night, of diverse forms (XIII, 2, 3). The sorceresses are said to prevail by its means (VIII, 4, 24). In some passages *asurasya māyā*, the māyā of Asura is repelled through Agni's aid (IV, 24, 5; VIII, 3, 24), and yet the gods go about with "asurasya māyā" (III, 9, 4). Rajwade, therefore, thinks that the word māyā would mean *asuratva*, possessing "creative power".[2]

[1] I. J. Allan, article on "Māyā", *E.R.E.*, vol. viii, p. 504.
[2] V. K. Rajwade, *Proceedings of Oriental Conference*, 1920, p. xii.

Tradition, as preserved in Sāyaṇa's commentary, gives us to understand that māyā in Vedic times meant *prajñā* and *kapata* (artifice and deception, *Betrug* and *Kraft* as most orientalists translate them). In the very first instance in which the term māyā occurs in the Ṛig Veda (I, 2, 7) Sāyaṇa, in his commentary, suggests two meanings. By *māyabhih* it may be understood *kapaṭaviśeshaih* (lit., by special stratagems, artifices) or, Sāyaṇa says, it may also mean *prajñābhih* (by wondrous powers, according to Griffith). In R.V., III, 27, 7, Sāyaṇa explains "*Māyayā*" by "*Karmavishayābhijñānena*", by knowledge of sacrificial rites. In R.V., IV, 30, 21, and V, 30, 6, Sāyaṇa emphatically gives the meaning *Śakti* (power). But in explaining the use of the word in R.V., II, 2, 10; III, 34, 6; IV, 16, 9, etc., Sāyaṇa gives the meaning "deception".

Sāyaṇa's two meanings for māyā, viz. "prajñā" and "kapaṭa" are easily explainable. *Prajñā* literally might mean knowledge but, in the Vedic period, we have reason to believe that "knowledge" was "power", mysterious power. Mysterious things were produced by this mysterious power (māyā-prajñā). What was produced by this mysterious power was extraordinary, of its very nature transcending the reach of the ordinary intellect. The mere mortal was thus deceived. The transition from the connotation "power" to "mysterious power" and "deceptive power" is quite natural to primitive understanding.

3

THE VEDIC USE OF THE WORD MĀYĀ

It is evident that in its Vedic application the word māyā has the very definite meaning of "power". This power alone makes it possible for some men to perform actions that are not within the reach of the average mortal. In a very real sense, māyā is "wonder-working power". Anyone, therefore, who wrought marvellous deeds, which surpassed the [illegible] of the Vedic Indian, must have recourse to [illegible] could account for the superhuman element in the sorcerer, the clever artisan (like Tvashtṛi), the crafty Dasyus, the evil Asuras and the benevolent gods. All of them possessed this magical property.

But, of itself, this power is beyond good and evil. Only when expressed specifically through individual agents, whether gods, demons or men, is it capable of being differentiated into good or bad māyā. The gods, for instance, who protect their devotees from the Asuras resort to māyā against their enemies; but the Asuras

also possess māyā; and it is precisely because of it they are dangerous.

But nowhere, in the Vedas, is this mysterious power thought of in abstract terms. It is always localized or personalized. It is only recognized in the concrete, coming into evidence in the action of some god or demon, or in some wonderful natural phenomenon as that of the sun and the moon following each other, or in the marvellous manner in which a thing functions.

Māyā gives its possessor control over others, even over those who already possess māyā. Because of it the Asuras become a menace to the gods and men; through the exercise of it the gods overpower the demons in turn; on account of it a Yātudhāna[1] is what he is, a sorcerer, and Tvashtṛi[2] a skilled workman. The gods themselves are what they are, capable of controlling the world of men, because of māyā.

The idea of māyā is also found in the rituals of the Vedic cult.[3] Agni, the ritualistic god *par excellence*, not only possesses māyā but it is in him that all the māyā of the māyins are brought together.[4] And it is very definitely stated that the earthly sacrificer[5] becomes himself possessed of māyā as a result of the ritual.

But māyā, in the Vedas, has no cosmic significance except where reference is made to the succession of day and night as due to māyā, and where the sun is said to follow the moon for the same reason.[6]

All things for which the Vedic Indian could not "naturally" account (that is, in so far as his knowledge of natural events could go) he ascribed to māyā. Every phenomenon defying an explanation was māyā. With one such phenomenon the Vedic Indian seems to be particularly familiar—a thing appearing to be something other than itself; the bringing into being something that did not have any existence on its own right. Such "appearance" he accounts for as due to māyā. Such appearances are also themselves called māyā. Thus Indra is able to change his form through māyā (R.V., VI, 47, 18) and a yātudhānu is capable of being now a man and now a woman (R.V., VIII, 104, 24). And in R.V., X, 54, 2, the very "fights" (Yuddhāni) of Indra are manifestations of māyā.

The term māyā, as used in the Vedas, means primarily mysterious, awesome, wonder-working power which produces effects that transcend human understanding. It gives its possessor power over others, gods inclusive, for good as well as for evil. It resides in men and in gods, and in the world generally. It is very definitely stated as being capable of producing "appearances".

In the classical Vedānta philosophy of later days the word

1 R.V., VIII, 104, 24.
2 *Ibid.*, X, 53, 9.
3 *Ibid.*, III, 27, 7.
4 *Ibid.*, III, 20, 3.
5 *Ibid.*, IX, 73, 3.
6 *Ibid.*, X, 85, 18.

stands for the "illusion" of the whole world. That is its primary connotation in the Vedānta, but not its sole meaning. Nevertheless, we cannot fail to recognize the intrinsic relationship that does exist between the use of the word māyā in the Vedas and the application of the same term in the Vedānta school of Philosophy. The "wonder-working power" which causes mysterious appearances of "tricks" in the Vedas, in the Vedānta, is the "stuff" of the world of sense-experience. The world is māyā because it is a "mystery"; it is an "appearance" brought to being by the power (māyā-śakti) of Īśvara.

4

PRE-VEDIC CONCEPTION OF MĀYĀ

Obviously the Vedic conception of māyā is a relatively later notion in Indian thought. It is a development from an original germ of primitive "speculation". The religious history of India does not begin at the time when the Veda was composed; it begins much earlier. The religion of the Ṛig Veda is comparatively a later creation. The Aryan settlers, in what comes to be known as Arya-varta, came under the influence of new conditions in a changing environment. They were racially becoming more and more complex, by inter-marriage with Dravidians; they found it necessary to modify many of the religious ideas they had brought with them. The people of the Vedic period are better styled Aryo-Dravidian rather than Indo-Aryan. To attempt an evaluation of the relative contribution of Aryan and Dravidian to the complex culture of this age is a hopeless task. We have insufficient knowledge of what was true Aryan, and we know facts regarding Dravidian thought long after it had been affected by the Aryan invasion.

We may not be able to separate the two main elements of the composite religion of the Vedic period, but we do know that the Pre-Vedic religion of the Indo-Aryan element was a Naturism in which phenomena of nature are deified. Father Sky and Mother Earth, and their children the luminous phenomena of the sky, the *deivos* or "shiners", persistently appear as the early gods of the Indo-Europeans and the Indo-Iranian. But in the Ṛig Vedic religion this Naturism is considerably modified by a pronounced Animism. The sacrifice, instead of being the central thing in the cult, yields to the idea of a pervasive power (Vidyā). In consequence, the gods melt into one another, losing their identity. A strong magical flavour makes itself unmistakably felt, in later Vedic religion.

Whence did this magical tendency arise? Recent archaeological evidence from the excavations in Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro point to the presence in India of a culture that must have had a long antecedent history on the soil of India, taking us back to an age that can only be dimly surmised.[1] The religion of the Indus people was a pronounced animism in which the worship of Śiva as a fertility deity and cults of the Mother Goddess figure largely. It is remarkable how immense is the hold of this ancient cult upon the popular religion of India even today; for while the Mother Goddess is worshipped here and there in her own person, she also takes the form of many female deities, the Grāma-devatas (Village Goddesses), such as the Goddess of Cholera, of Small-pox, and the like, which still continue to exercise a powerful influence on the village religion, especially of South India.

In all probability the religious heritage of the Indus Valley culture was passed on first to the Dravidians. They have maintained it more or less intact, almost to the present day, in spite of the alien influence of Aryan religious ideas. What is more, they undoubtedly influenced, in their turn, Aryan culture, so much so that it became increasingly composite and Indian. Obviously there is a direct and unbroken continuity between the early peoples of the Indus Valley age and modern Indians. Dr. Gordon Childe maintains that "the Indus Civilization represents a very perfect adjustment of human life to a specific environment that can only have resulted from years of patient effort. And it has endured; it is already specifically Indian and forms the basis of modern Indian culture. In architecture, industry, still more in religion, Mohenjo-Daro reveals features that have always been characteristic of historic India."[2]

The non-Aryan element of the population was never wholly exterminated. The southern part of India, in fact, nearly all the peninsula proper, is still racially predominantly non-Aryan. Aryan languages would have spread more widely than Aryan blood in the occupation of the land; still, the South is still linguistically unconquered. In fact the prevailing Aryan element of the north-west of India becomes continually weaker as we go east and south, so much so that the non-Aryan or Dravidian element in the Gangetic Doab, the ancient Madhyadesa, is stronger than the Aryan element.[3] Farther east, in ancient Magadha and Videha, the Aryan element is still smaller, and the population must always

[1] Sir John Marshall, *Mohenjo-Daro and the Indus Civilization*, 1931, vol. i, p. 106.

[2] Gordon Childe, *New Light on the Most Ancient East*, 1934, p. 220.

[3] H. H. Risley, *The People of India*, Thacker, Spink, London, 1915, pp. 33 ff.

have been prevailingly non-Aryan. It is hard to conceive of the Aryanization of so vast a mass of Dravidians, without the Dravidians, on their part, leaving their mark on the composite Indian culture.

From the standpoint of linguistics there is evidence of the influence of Dravidian on Indo-Aryan languages. There is a decided similarity in the use of postpositions in the modern Aryan vernaculars and in the Dravidian; both groups of languages make use of an oblique form of the noun to which prepositions are attached. The order of words in the modern vernaculars has become Dravidian and not Sanskritic. The use of prepositions has ceased; the conjunctive participle has been developed. Even classical Sanskrit shows evidence of this borrowing.[1]

Students of Dravidian culture go further in their claims. Some of them are even inclined to believe that the caste system itself is of Dravidian origin.[2] Still others conjecture that the sources of later Indian philosophy are really to be traced to Dravidian origins. The "*ahimsa*" of the Jains, the Upanishadic concept of "an essence which sustains even the gods", an "all-pervading spirit", the Hindu theory of transmigration, and even the classical advaitism of the Vedanta. "All these doctrines, which have won the admiration of many . . . are in the ultimate test simple . . . inevitable conclusions from the primary animistic beliefs which the Aryans encountered when they came into serious touch with the Dravidians of the lower Gangetic plain."[3] But they cannot substantiate such claims.

Whitehead[4] and Elmore,[5] in their fascinating studies of the characteristic deities of Dravidian religion, still propitiated in the south of India, justify the conclusion that the general type of Dravidian religion the early Aryans came upon was Animism. The innumerable gods and goddesses of later Dravidian religious practice are spirit-beings, associated with some animal, disease, or force of nature. It is so in Madras even today. The religious conceptions found in the earlier books of the Ṛig Veda represent Aryan thought little affected by contact with Dravidians. But as we come to the later hymns of the Ṛig, and most decidedly in the Atharva, we meet with a magical religion not unlike Dravidian

[1] R. Caldwell, *Comparative Grammar of Dravidian Languages*, London, 1875, pp. 339 ff., 225 ff.

[2] Gilbert Slater, *The Dravidian Element in Indian Culture*, London, 1924, pp. 50 ff.

[3] G. W. Brown, essay on "Sources of Indian Philosophy" in *Studies in Honour* [illegible], 1921, p. 86.

[4] H. [illegible] *Gods of South India*, Calcutta, 1916.

[5] W. T. Elmore, *Dravidian Gods in Modern Hinduism*, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1915.

animism. This by itself may not prove that the Aryan had conceded a certain validity to Dravidian religious notions. But such a development, even if it be purely an Aryan magical parallel counterpart of the more distinctively religious line of thought-progress, is highly significant.

It indicates that both the Aryan and Dravidian of the Vedic age were still in the rudimentary stages of religious consciousness. Among all peoples at a similar stage of religious evolution we find, behind their animism, the same idea of a mysterious power as the word māyā signifies in the Vedas. Indeed, there is reason to believe that pre-Vedic māyā, whether Aryan or Dravidian in origin, would come under the religious category of "Mana". This is the "Mystic Reality" of the primitive mind which the primitive recognizes in the world about him. To him, "Mana" surpasses all representation. It constantly changes in form, but abides beneath all these transformations as the ultimate potent residue. Codrington found it as Mana among the Melanesians; Speiser among the natives of New Hebrides (he translates it as *Lebenskraft*); Neuhauss and the German missionaries of New Guinea call the native equivalent of that region *Seelenstoff*. In Loango, Dr. Pechuel-Loesche discovered the primitives believing in a *Potenz*.

5

MĀYĀ AND MANA

The comparative method in the study of religion is based on the assumption that human nature is the same everywhere. It is uniform in its general tendencies. We can classify them under formulae coextensive with the whole field of anthropological research. If so, pre-Vedic Māyā and the Melanesian Mana may be considered as fundamentally the same. They represent similar ideas.

They both concern the fundamental nature of the religious experience of the primitive. A psychological rather than a purely anthropological or linguistic method of investigation is more helpful here. For one thing, such an approach keeps us constantly reminded of the religious subject—the primitive man and his mental make up. It minimizes the danger of our imputing to the primitive mind ideas and processes of which it is not capable; we avoid the danger of the "psychologist's fallacy" of intellectualism. Moreover, it helps us to so translate primitive religious experience that it does not suffer by misinterpretation.

Primitive religion is not so much a matter of thought as of

feeling; it is connected with the sense of mystery or weirdness. At this period of human history religion develops under conditions which play upon the emotions and evoke motor processes which result in more or less automatic action. The fundamental basis of all belief is this primitive sense of the Supernatural. Supernatural awe is at the root of both religion and magic. Distinction between them should not be pushed too far. "Rudimentary" magic (as when an enraged lover throws the picture of his sweetheart into the fire) is an act of primitive credulity, or naïve belief. But "developed" magic, the spirit of which is expressed in a formula, is "make-believe". It is projective, and the spell henceforth becomes an integral part of magical rites. This projective act, to the primitive mind, is apparent as the projection of his will, "a psychic force, a manifestation of personal agency". But inasmuch as the merely symbolical make-believe materializes as a solid fact the process is apparently also occult or supernatural. There is no evidence that the magician looked upon it as "determined by the operation of immutable laws acting mechanically",[1] as Frazer would have it. To primitive thought it must have been, rather, a mysterious, occult, super-normal power which transmutes the pretence of reality.

Marett[2] has effectively pointed out the apparently close affinity that exists between spell and prayer. He shows how in the case of many magical formulae to be changed into religious petition all that would be needed is a slight change in the formation of words, and a little personification. This is the place where the hard-and-fast bifurcation between religion and magic is most open to criticism. While it is possible to conceive of magic as existing *sui generis*, to the primitive mind, where emotional awe, the Mana outlook, is more than "the ideal construction", there is a tendency for the overlapping of magic and religion.

Magic, then, falls within the realm of Supernaturalism—within that sphere (which is really magico-religious) where man comes in contact with powers, awe-inspiring, and "wonder-full", whose modes of action transcend the ordinary and the calculable. He comes to the awful realization that he is alive in a world that is alive. Not with spirits and souls full armed (that is a later development) but with "power", Mana, Māyā.

Codrington defines Mana, in its Melanesian use, as "a force altogether distinct from physical power, which acts in all kinds of ways for good and evil, and which it is of the greatest advantage to possess and control". Or again, he says: "It is a power or influence not physical, and in a way supernatural; but it shows

[1] J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, i, p. 221.
[2] R. R. Marett, *The Threshold of Religion*, pp. 31 ff.

itself in physical force, or in any kind of power or excellence which a man possesses."[1]

Among the Sioux Indians, for instance, the term Wakan or Wakanda serves the same purpose. "The term", says McGee, "may be translated as 'mystery' perhaps more satisfactorily than in any other single English word, yet this rendering is at the same time too limited, as Wakanda vaguely connotes also power, sacred, ancient, grandeur, animate, immortal."[2]

In all these cases where we find evidence of belief in Mana—using the term as a comparative category and avoiding descriptions that are local and specific—we notice that it signifies power, operative and thaumaturgic. But it is not always at work; sometimes it is dormant or potential. It would appear as if the term stands for the "supernatural", that is from the standpoint of the primitive mind. The primitive makes no distinction between an order of uniform happenings and a different order of miraculous happenings. He is merely concerned in noticing and availing himself of the difference when it shows itself in the concrete.

Again, only in the concrete does Mana assume its moral dimension. Mana, as such, is mystically potent alike for good and evil. In itself, it possesses no moral significance. In the Samoan language, for instance, "fa'a-mana-mana" is used to attribute an accident or misfortune to the powers, while "fa'a-mana" signifies extraordinary power, as for healing.[3]

This dependence of primitive thought on the concrete does not mean that the primitive was incapable of grasping the invisible and the intangible. On the contrary: he merely places alongside of the world of sense-experience another world imaginatively conceived, invisible and intangible. And he is forever correlating the two. So much so that M. Levy-Bruhl finds the primitive's whole outlook "mystique"; that is, determined by "belief in forces, influences and activities imperceptible to the senses but nevertheless real".[4]

To man in the instinctive stage of an animal, "power" comes as a sense-impression in the mind only in some concrète external thing which impinges upon a sense and evokes a response. But at the definitely human stage in his development man "perceives" power, though he is not able to place it. He goes about trying to co-ordinate the unknown "power" with things he knows, by

[1] R. H. Codrington, *The Melanesians*, Oxford, 1891, pp. 118–20.

[2] W. J. McGee, *Fifteenth Annual Report of the U.S. Bureau of Ethnology*, Washington, 1898, p. 182.

[3] E. Tregear, *The Maori-Polynesian Comparative Dictionary*, Wellington, N.Z., 1891, *s.v. Mana.*

[4] M. Levy-Bruhl, *The Soul of the Primitive*, London, 1928, p. 39.

extending similarity to identity. He discovers that the unknown, mysterious power is like life. Its action resembles that of living things. So this "power" becomes the image concept "like-life". Or again, the "power" is perceived under the image of will, "like-will".[1] Not that the savage has even the vaguest idea of will as a faculty of persons or things; he regards objects which impress him as having "power", as able to do or not to do something which he believes to be in its power, just like living or conscious beings that he knows.

The primitive mind is not capable of exact discrimination even among the images it forms; it cannot keep these image-concepts of "power" that is "like-life" and "like-will" separate and distinct. They tend to overlap and mingle with one another. That is how there develops a composite image-concept in which the powerful thing is represented as both like-life and like-will. So it happens that the idea which terms like Mana, Wakanda, and Māyā represent is of a "mysterious potency which carries with it almost invariably associations of life and volition".[2] This rudimentary conception of the pre-animistic chapter in religious history, the awe-inspiring "life-power-will" characteristic of primitive religious experience which is conveniently termed Mana, does it not correspond to the notion of Māyā? Māyā, that is, as it was conceived in pre-Vedic India.

Marett[3] finds the term "supernatural" as the least objectionable English equivalent for this force which is "beyond the ordinary power of man, and outside the common processes of nature". This Mana or the "supernatural", the primitive mind becomes aware of as a fundamental aspect of life. And such awareness is usually associated with a specific group of vital reactions, which seek expression in both magic and religion. The truth of this is fully borne out in the religious history of India. For Mana, like Māyā, is coextensive with the supernatural, differing in intensity, but never in essence; the impersonal conception of the supernatural persisting on through the long line of development of man's religious consciousness—"the power that belongeth unto God".

Nor should we fail to notice that there is still another factor, an important and persuasive element of the primitive philosophy in this concept—a sort of primitive *weltanschauung*. Arthur Lovejoy points this out in his essay on "The fundamental concept of primitive philosophy".[4] Basing his arguments on a careful

[1] Fletcher, "On the Import of the Totem Among the Omahas", *Proceedings of the American Association for the Advancement of Science*, 1897, p. 326.

[2] J. Murphy, *Primitive Man*, Oxford, 1927, p. 28.

[3] R. R. Marett, *The Threshold of Religion*, p. 110.

[4] Arthur Lovejoy, *The Monist*, 1906, xv, p. 360.

analysis of the Mana of the Melanesian, the Manitou of the Algonquins, the Oki of the Iroquois and the Wakanda of the Dakota Indians, he concludes: "With something approaching uniformity we find, as the underlying and all-controlling preconception in the thought of savages, a belief of which the following propositions express the essential features: that there is present in nature a diffused and interconnected impersonal energy or vital force, some *quantum* of which is possessed by all or most things or persons; that the amount of this energy is more or less fixed or limited; that any unusual, striking or alarming power, ability or productivity in anything is evidence of the special presence of this force; that it is localized in different natural objects, or possessed by different persons in varying degrees; that the most important property of anything consists in the amount of this energy which inheres in it; that portions of such vital energy may be transferred from one person or thing to another, and may be controlled, regulated, insulated, by various devices, usually of a mechanical sort; that contact between a person or object highly charged with it will, without violation of either, produce, as it were, an explosion of vital force highly dangerous to the weaker party,[1] and it may be to both; that the chief end of man is to get possession and control of this force; and that the chief utility of an immense variety of rites lies in the manipulation of it."

6

THE WELTANSCHAUUNG OF THE VEDAS

Throughout its later history, the word māyā, whether employed in connection with religion, philosophy, folk-lore or the sciences, has the underlying meaning of power mysteriously responsible for magical transformation. In the classical Vedānta it is used to signify the "magic-world" of sense-perception. The world is māyā, illusion, if you will, because One Thing alone, says the Vedāntin, is real. The negation of the world is necessitated by the positive affirmation of a single metaphysical Principle. The classical doctrine of Māyā is a negative statement of a positive truth, that the Brahman alone is real.

In the Vedas we find no evidence for belief in the negative aspect of the māyā doctrine. To the Vedic Indian the world is decidedly real. But as we come to the later sections of the Ṛig Veda and in many sections of the Atharva we catch significant

[1] Marett very effectively argues that negative Mana is tabu. *Op. cit.*, pp. 73 ff.

glimpses of a decided monism, philosophic monism, alongside of a a religious monotheism. This is the outcome of the earliest attempts of Hindu religious thought to discover a unitary world-ground.

Deussen hails this step with almost reverential enthusiasm. "The Hindus arrive at monism", he says, "by a method essentially different from that of other countries. Monotheism was attained in Egypt by a mechanical identification of the various local gods, in Palestine by proscription of other gods, and violent persecution of their worshippers for the benefit of their national Jehovah. In India they reached monism, though not monotheism, on a more philosophical path, seeing through the veil of the manifold the unity which lies under it."[1] Radhakrishnan has a different story to tell: "The Vedic Aryan", he holds, "felt keenly the mystery of the ultimate and the inadequacy of the prevailing conceptions. . . . The gradual idealization of the conception of god as revealed in the cult of Varuṇa, the logic of religion which tended to make the gods flow into one another, the henotheism which tended towards monotheism, the conception of *Ṛita* or the unity of nature, the systematizing impulse of the human mind—all helped towards the displacement of a polytheistic anthropomorphism by a spiritual monotheism."[2] Yet, again, there is Bloomfield's characterization of this transition in Vedic thought: "Polytheism grown cold in service, and unnice in its distinctions leading to an opportunist monotheism, in which every god takes the sceptre and none keeps it."[3]

The fact is that in all primitive thinking, religious or social, there is an inevitable tendency towards a process of unification. Man's progress towards and in civilization proceeds by a series of integrations, by the formation of more and more comprehensive and yet more definite wholes which are linked together by successive differentiations.[4] What happens is that man, with his unifying tendency, forms a primitive integration whether in his mental or practical life. This integration on the emergence of some new power or idea in man is found inadequate and is broken through by a differentiation which applies the new power or idea to wider areas of experience. Out of the more differentiated phenomena and relations thus arrived at, the mind with its determined search for unity creates a new integration, larger, richer and more organized than the former one. This again is followed by another differentiation, and so the process goes on, man ever becoming more capable of more comprehensive, higher and finer

[1] P. Deussen, *Outlines of Philosophy*, Grafton, New York, 1908.
[2] Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, i, p. 91.
[3] M. Bloomfield, *The Religion of the Veda*, p. 199.
[4] J. Murphy, *Primitive Man*, pp. 24 ff.

integrations, both of his own inner life and of his outward social relations.

That is how in the Vedas we find a great variety of thought and feeling concurring; resulting in crude congeries of ideas. A number of material objects is magnified as the ultimate world ground and invested with fictitious sanctity. But on the whole these extraordinary representations in the Vedas of a unitary conception of the world-whole are in terms of the ritualistic and the anthropomorphic. Everything connected with the religious rite is held to have a spiritual as well as a physical potency. All parts of nature are separately conceived of as invested with divine power; and yet as constituent parts of one great whole.

On the one side, this process of unification in the Vedic search for a single power behind the world leads to what Max Müller called Henotheism. One by one several gods are elevated to the prominence of being *the* God; all others temporarily become merged into this One. But the God is still a religious, ritualistic, objective deity, endowed with attributes; not a philosophic principle. He is made responsible for the creation of the world. Thus in Ṛig Veda, X, 121:

> Prajāpati, than thou there is none other
> Who holds in his embrace the whole creation.

In R.V., X, 81 and 82, it is Viśvakarman (the "All-maker") who establishes all things. As a result of a sacrificial dismemberment of his body, Purusha (literally, Man) forms all parts of the World in R.V., X, 90. In R.V., X, 72, however, the creator is Brahmaṇaspati.

> Brahmaṇaspati like a smith
> Together forged this universe.
> When gods existed not as yet,
> Then Being from non-Being did arise.

In R.V., X, 125, Vāc, who appears in numerous passages as the consort of Prajāpati, says:

> I wander with the Rudras and the Vasus,
> With the Ādityas and the Viśvadevas
> I support both Mitra and Varuṇa,
> Indra and Agni and the Aśvins too,
>
> I am the queen, the showerer of riches,
> The knowing, first of the worshipped ones;
> Me have the gods in many forms displayed,
> Me, living everywhere and entering all things.
>
> . . . . .

> It is I who blow forth like the wind,
> Spreading into beings all that exist;
> Beyond the sky, beyond this earth,
> So great have I by my glory become.[1]

Although there are indications that this idea of a henotheistic deity is an improvement on the ritualistic conceptions of the Ṛig Veda, the trend is towards a decided theism. The world-ground is thought of as a personal God, Who creates, supports and sustains this world of men.

But parallel with this monotheistic trend, in the later speculation of the Vedic poets, there is also a very noticeable monism. That is to say, the world-ground is thought of as the First Principle, the ultimate Reality. The "tad ekam", the "that One" of this monistic speculation is beyond all attributes, impersonal and non-theistic. One such remarkable flash of philosophic insight is contained in the famous selection from the Ṛig Veda which Deussen calls the "most remarkable monument of the oldest philosophy".

> There was then neither what is nor what is not, there was no sky, nor the heaven which is beyond. What covered? Where was it, and in whose shelter? Was the water the deep abyss (in which it lay)?
>
> There was no death, hence was there nothing immortal. There was no light (distinction) between night and day. That One breathed by itself without breath, other than it there has been nothing.
>
> Love overcame it in the beginning, which was the seed springing from mind, poets having searched in their heart found by wisdom the bond of what is in what is not.
>
> Their ray which was stretched across, was it below or above? There were seed-bearers, there were powers, self-power below, and will above.
>
> Who then knows, who has declared it here, from whence was born this creation? The gods came later than this creation, who then knows whence it arose?
>
> He from whom this creation arose, whether he made it or did not make it, the highest seer in the highest heaven, he forsooth knows, or does even he not know?[2]

The Atharva also contains speculative material very much in the same vein as those in the Ṛig.[3] Prajāpati, the Lord of creatures, [illegible] to as a sort of demiurge. Epithets [illegible] Vidhātar (Arranger), Parameshṭhin[5] (He that is supreme) are ascribed to him. In these

[1] P. D. Shastri, *Doctrine of Māyā*, p. 43.
[2] Max Müller, *Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, 1899, p. 65.
[3] Bloomfield, *Atharva Veda*, pp. 86 ff.
[4] A.V., VII, 17, 1.
[5] *Ibid.*, X, 3, 24; IX, 5, 7.

particular passages the trend of speculation is still monotheistic, however. But there are instances where the world-ground is traced to an imp[illegible] sometimes even to material objects. Thus, for [illegible][1] as the "Ruddy One" in several Atharvan hymns would seem to appear as a cosmic principle. Elsewhere, it is water that is held responsible for the whole world, in the final analysis. In A.V., X, 8, 43, 44, the wind as the "life-breath", the Ātman in the Universe is considered the Ultimate. The power of time (kāla)[2] and of desire (kāma)[3] figure at other times in the Atharvan speculations as the force behind the evolution of the universe. Or still more abstractly, the world-all is derived from a hardly defined "support", that is, a fundamental Principle (Skambha) on which everything rests.

In all these Vedic speculations about the ultimate world-ground it is possible to trace four distinct lines [illegible] along which progress is made. There is first [illegible] tion of purely religious thinking which derives its impetus from the idea of the "supernatural". The ultimate power is traced to one or the other of the many gods of the Vedic religion.

It is difficult to deny that in the Vedic conception of Varuṇa there is a very remarkable element of ethical theism.

> Both this earth here belongs to King Varuṇa and also yonder broad sky, whose bounds are far away. The two oceans are Varuṇa's loins; yea, in this petty drop of water is he hidden.
>
> Whoso should flee beyond the heavens far away would yet not be free from King Varuṇa. From the sky his spies come hither; with a thousand eyes they do watch over the earth.
>
> All this King Varuṇa does behold—what is between the two firmaments, what beyond. Numbered of him are the winkings, thus does he establish these (laws).
>
> Atharva Veda, IV, 16.

The distinctly religious note of dependence is struck in a very remarkable hymn where Varuṇa as the guardian of the moral order in the universe (Ṛita) is pictured as being offended with the misdeeds of men. The poet, deeply contrite, says:

> What was my chief offence, O Varuṇa,
> That thou wouldst slay thy friend who sings thy praises
> Tell me, ineffable Lord, of noble nature,
> That I may be prompt to quench thy wrath with homage!
>
> Loose us from sins committed by our fathers,
> From all those too, which we ourselves committed!
> Loose us, as thieves are loosed that lifted cattle;
> As from a calf, take off Vaśishṭha's fetters!

[1] A.V., XIII, 1, 6 ff. [2] *Ibid.*, XIX, 53, 4 ff.; cf., XIX, 54.
[3] *Ibid.*, XIX, 52, 1; IX, 2, 19.

'Twas not my own sense, Varuṇa! 'Twas deception,
'Twas scant thought, strong drink, or dice or passion.
The old are there to lead astray the younger,
Nay, sleep itself provokes unrighteous actions.
Ṛig Veda, VII, 86.

The second line of approach is through the ritual itself. No one would deny that the life-nerve of Vedic religion is the ritual. The Ṛig Veda is therefore, primarily, a liturgy, and the Vedic poet is never so completely lost to the Muses as to forget that he is also an officiating priest. Wherever his wild flights of fancy may roam, it always comes right back to the practical business of the ritual which is the centre of his religious life and experience. That being so, it is not surprising that Vedic speculations about the world-basis, the Eternal "that One", *tad ekam*, should be also inspired by the thought of the ritual itself.

To the Vedic Indian there was no difference between the external, overt act, the "symbol" as we would call it, and the inner significance or meaning of the ritual which we moderns call the subjective fact of experience. He viewed the sacrifice in its entirety, as a complicated ritualistic system, every minute detail of which had to be properly manipulated. For then, and then only, it afforded the worshipper opportunity to tap what Oldenberg[1] calls the "*Zauberfluidum*", the hidden forces of the world, for his own advantage. The primitive inability to keep distinct the two worlds of the objective ritual actually being performed and the subjective experience with all its emotional content of that "mysterium tremendum", is probably responsible for the rudimentary mystic, almost magical, realization of a communion between the two principals involved in the ritual, the sacrificer and the One to whom the sacrifice is offered. Not that there is a feeling of a subject-object relationship: there is, on the contrary, a feeling of unification. The whole process is not thought out: it is felt. This, indeed, is the original plasm of the later crude mysticism (or magical "knowledge") of the Brāhmaṇas and the early Upanishads which, in turn, give birth to the intuitive realization of Reality that is characteristic of the *Vidyā* which is the basic foundation of the Hindu *Jñāna mārga* (the way of intuitive knowledge) whether of the classic Vedānta, Sāṁkhya or Yoga.

The primitive concept of "power" residing everywhere is concretely unified at the ritual, the māyās of all the māyins merge in and unify in the Māyā of the sacrifice itself. Through the logic of necessity? Perhaps. As the outcome of emotional *rapport*? Possibly. But most certainly because through such a unification

[1] Oldenberg, *Die Lehre der Upanishadem*, etc., Göttingen, 1915, p. 49.

of the "*Zauberfluidum*" at the sacrifice the practical motive for obtaining the desired control on the part of the sacrificer was assured. The sacrifice itself loses its value as a means: the "power" of the sacrifice, the *knowledge* of this power becomes important. As we come to the end of the Vedic period, the close of the Atharva and the beginning of the Brāhmaṇas—the boundary is not to be thought of in lines set hard and fast—it is not the sacrifice, not the gods, not the priest's meticulous care of the details of the ritual, not these *alone*, but the "*knowledge*" of the "Mana" (to use a category of Comparative Religion) in the sacrifice, the *Brahman*, that becomes important. Knowledge of the power is above everything else. That is *the* thing, "that One". Because "to know" it is to possess it.

Another line of thought, curiously enough, seems to be based on the analogy established between the human organism and the cosmos. What more natural than for a people who feel that they live in a world that is alive to think of the world in terms of themselves? Does not human thought still continue to be anthropomorphic and anthropocentric? The Vedic poet was not using a figure of speech when he called the world a huge man in the famous Purusha hymn (R.V., X, 90). To him it was actually so. [illegible] still in its naïveté, persists in the Upanishadic [illegible] the world is a Purusha (Man).

1 Thousand-headed was Purusha, thousand-eyed, thousand-footed. He embraced the earth on all sides, and stood beyond the breadth of ten fingers.

2 The Purusha is this all, that which was and which shall be. He is Lord of immortality, which he grows beyond through (sacrificial) food.

. . . . .

6 When the gods spread out the sacrifice with the purusha as oblation, spring was its ghee, summer its fuel, autumn the oblation.

. . . . .

11 When they divided the Purusha into how many parts did they arrange him? What was his mouth? What his two arms? What were his thighs and feet called?

12 The Brahmin was his mouth, his two arms were made the Rājanya (warrior), his two thighs the Vaiśya (trader, etc.) from his feet the Sūdra (servile class) was born.

13 The moon was born from his spirit (manas), from his eye was born the sun, from his mouth Indra and Agni, from his breath Vāyu (wind) was born.

14 From his navel arose the middle sky, from his head the heaven originated, from his feet the earth, the quarters from his ear. Thus did they fashion the worlds.

Ṛig Veda, X, 90.

Parallel to the ritualistic line of thought, and the speculation about the universe on a human analogy, there is evidence also of a fourth line of primitive intellection. This is by far the most advanced, and decidedly philosophical in its approach to the problem of Reality. It is not improbable that it acquires its original impetus from the other lines of thought already described. Indeed, it would appear that these four lines of thinking do not exactly keep parallel: they not only tend to converge, they cross and recross. The idea of the gods occurs in the ritualistic thought; the ritualistic thought is present in the Purusha speculation; and all these are evident in the monistic philosophic abstractions. The primitive mind is apt to form composite image-concepts, and they are the result of the over-lapping of several minor concepts.

It may be as the outcome of the unification of ritualistic thinking which ended later in the knowledge of the "power" of sacrifice, or it may be the result of the analogy between the "vital breath" in man and the "prāṇa" (vital breath) of the cosmic Purusha, but there actually emerges the idea of "essence" in the Ṛig Vedic thought. The problem of the "sat", that which is in the final analysis, the Being; and that of the "a-sat", that which is other than the essence, the Being-plus, engages the attention of the Vedic philosopher. At such moments he becomes even non-religious; at times sceptical about the gods. Reference has already been made to the famous Nāsadāsīya hymn (R.V., X, 129). Here is the corresponding conception of the Hiraṇyagarbha (golden germ), where the human analogue, the idea of the "essence", the ritualistic concept and god-idea, all coalesce:

> As the Golden Germ he arose in the beginning; when born he was one Lord of the existent. He supported the earth and this heaven. What God with our oblation shall we worship?
>
> He who gives breath, who gives strength, whose command all the gods wait upon, whose shadow is immortality, is death—what God with an oblation shall we worship?
>
> Who through his greatness is over that which breathes and closes the eye is only King of the World, who is Lord of the two-footed and four-footed—what God with an oblation shall we worship?
>
> Through whom the mighty heaven and earth have been fixed, through whom the sun has been established, through whom the firmament; who in the middle of the sky measures out the air—what God with an oblation shall we worship?
>
> To whom the two realms (heaven and earth), sustained by his aid, looked up, trembling in spirit, over whom the risen sun shines—what God with an oblation shall we worship?
>
> Ṛig Veda, X, 121.

All these four lines of thinking tend to converge as we enter the

period of the Upanishads. The Prajāpati-Viśvakarman of the henotheistic religious urge, the Brahman of the ritualistic "*Zauber-fluidum*", the Ātman of the anthropo-analogical discovery, the Sat of the non-religious speculation, significant glimpses of all four of which we find in the literature of the period of the Vedas; they become synonymous for the One behind all. Here, then, we have unmistakable tendencies towards the *positive* affirmation of the One, single Ultimate: it is this truth which the doctrine of Māyā purports to convey in a negative formula in the later Vedānta.

CHAPTER II

THE WORLD-VIEW OF THE UPANISHADS

I

THE "END OF THE VEDAS"

The Upanishads are the concluding section of the Vedas—the *Vedānta*, "the end of the Vedas". As a matter of fact, they were originally integral parts of the Brāhmaṇas which deal with the elaboration of sacrificial regulations. As this type of literature develops, quasi-philosophical considerations become more and more pronounced, resulting in a body of mystical teachings called the Upanishads. To later orthodoxy the Upanishads present an altogether different type of literature from the Vedic Saṁhitās, Brāhmaṇas and Āraṇyakas. In a way this distinction seems justified. For while the latter are primarily concerned with the performance of ritualistic sacrifices (*Karma*, works) as leading to salvation (*Mukti*), the former are mystic teachings which initiate the elect into knowledge of the ultimate truth and reality. This knowledge automatically, as it were, gives man control over his destiny. In this way of knowledge (*jñāna mārga*) works, Vedic observances, are redundant: the esoteric "knowledge" was of its nature redemptive.

The value of the Upanishads has been variously estimated. M. Regnaud, for one, dismisses them with a superior gesture of disdain. "Arbitrary or legendary doctrines," he remarks, "that is to say, those which have sprung from individual or popular imagination, such as the Upanishads, resemble a gallery of portraits whose originals have long since been dead. They have no more than an historical value, the principal interest of which is for supplying important elements for the study of the human mind."[1]

Religious enthusiasm and philosophic idealism, on the other hand, are naturally inclined to be over enthusiastic in their judgments. Theosophists, for instance, acclaim the Upanishads as a world-scripture for seekers after truth in all religions.[2] "They have", avers Rabindranath Tagore, "the breadth of a universal soil that can supply with living sap all religions which have any spiritual ideal hidden at their core, or apparent in their fruit and foliage."[3] Arthur Schopenhauer, after reading Anquetil du

[1] Regnaud, *Materiaux pour servir a l'histoire de la philosophie de l'Inde*, Paris, 1878, II., p. 204.

[2] Mead and Chattopadhyaya, *The Upanishads*, London, 1898, p. 5.

[3] Radhakrishnan, *Philosophy of the Upanishads*, Macmillan, 1924, p. x.

Perron's Latin version of a Persian rendering, spoke of them as "products of the highest wisdom" that proved a solace in his life—even unto death.[1] And J. S. Mackenzie contends that they "are the earliest attempt at a constructive theory of the cosmos, and certainly one of the most interesting and remarkable".[2]

In our investigation it is their historical value that is of prime importance. They are certainly the foundations on which rests most of Hindu India's later philosophic thought and religious life. Every important form of Hindu thought, whether orthodox or heterodox, finds its root in the Upanishads. They are, indeed, the fountain-heads of all classical Hindu thought.

In the Upanishads we still find heavy traces of the Saṁhitā mythology, the Brāhmaṇa hair-splitting and the Āraṇyaka theosophy. But more than everything, what counts is the esoteric knowledge of a mystic realization of oneness with the First Principle of the Universe. The theory of "identification" which becomes almost a passion in the Brāhmaṇa period, and the logical development of the "power" of knowledge (*Vidyā*), both under the compulsion of a religious motive for salvation, provide the soil for philosophic speculation. But no one particular theory is set forth and expounded. Many ideas are mechanically juxtaposed in a whole mass of unorganized material.

The Upanishadic period is a long stretch in the religious history of India. The earliest of those treatises were possibly compiled by 500 B.C. prior to the age of Gautama Buddha; but some of them were written as late as the Mohammedan period. With the passage of time there is admittedly an intensification of thought, a noticeable and an obvious development in the meaning-content of the terms employed in explaining the nature (as well as the concept) of the mystic knowledge with which the Upanishads deal.

The *Aitareya*, the *Kaushītaki*, the *Taittirīya*, the *Chāndogya*, the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka* and parts of the *Kena* are generally conceded to be the earliest of the Upanishadic treatises.[3] The *Kaṭhopanishad* in which we come across elements of the Sāṁkhya and Yoga is probably later. So also the *Īśa* and the *Māṇḍūkya* which do not make any secret of a decided confusion of nascent philosophic theories that later crystallized into the classical *darśanas*. The *Śvetāśvatara* indicates by its frequent use of the technical terms current in the later classical systems that the latter were already in the process of differentiation at the time it was composed.

The transition from the Brahmanic thought to the Upanishadic

[1] Schopenhauer, *Parerga*, II, 185 (Werke, 6.437).
[2] Mackenzie, *E.R.E.*, vol. viii, p. 597.
[3] R. D. Ranade, *A Constructive Survey of the Upanishadic Philosophy*, Poona, 1926, pp. 12 ff.

speculations, according to Prof. Das Gupta, "is probably the most remarkable event in the history of philosophic thought".[1] He points out that the natural development from the last books of the Ṛig Veda, where there is a noticeable trend towards monotheism, would have been a theism, in a definitely religious form. The objectivity of the deity would have prevailed. Instead we find in the Upanishads, from the very outset, a shifting of the centre from the outer to the inner world, from the Objective to the Subjective.

This is accounted for in many ways. The growth of Vedic worship and ritualistic cult reached a stage of arrested development in the period of the Brāhmaṇas. This is clearly testified to by the social conditions, the type of god-idea and the form of worship of the times. Social distinctions lead to the formation of caste; pantheism, in some form or other, congeals into a religious concept; and the method of sacrifice from being a means becomes an end. The very mechanism of worship is now the centre of religious interest. The development of Caste and the consequent restriction of Vedic "knowledge" to the "twice-born", and the hair-splitting issues over elaborate *minutiae* of ritualistic formula possibly paved the way for subjective thought.

But Hindu thought is not yet subjective; it is only arriving at a condition where subjectivity is possible. In the Āraṇyakas, "forest-treatises", there is an indication of the transference of values from the concrete sacrifice to its symbolic representation. Thought-activity in the form of meditation, still connected with the rituals, displaces the external rites. Out of the bewildering maze of unrestricted speculation, it would appear, there emerges one compelling idea: the magic power of the ritual associated with the idea of *Ṛita* (the Ṛig Vedic notion of cosmic law or order), abstracted from the concrete ritual as such, and conceived of as the supreme power (Brahman). In the Upanishads this supreme power is finally identified with the idea of the inner self (Ātman) of man. The monistic theory of the Brahman-Ātman, the one reality, is formulated into a doctrine.

Prof. Franklin Edgerton suggests a more naturalistic account of this passage of the Hindu mind from the Brāhmaṇas to the Upanishads which is less open to the "psychologist's fallacy" than the foregoing.[2] Bearing in mind the practical and religious nature of the quest for "knowledge" and the intellectual background of that age, he shows how "knowledge" was considered "power" in itself. We constantly find, from early Vedic times on, that "he

[1] S. N. Das Gupta, *Indian Philosophy*, Cambridge, 1922, vol. i, p. 31.

[2] F. Edgerton, *The Upanishads: What do they Seek, and Why?* Reprint from *J.O.A.S.*, vol. xlix, No. 2, pp. 99–121.

who knows thus", *yā evam veda*, gets the benefit. At first the end desired is a specific boon. Later, as we come to the Upanishadic period, the desire is for everything. The quest is now to discover that which is the essence of all, and to know it; for "knowing" it is to have control over it. The early Upanishads would then be no profound, philosophic treatises replete with metaphysical abstractions characterized by subjectivity but only a continuation of the "magical" philosophy of seeking that "holy knowledge", *Brahma vidyā*, which is power unto salvation—for one's self naturally. And "with the passage of time" (centuries, in fact), as Dr. Edgerton observes, "we can see what might be called a gradual spiritualization of the notion of the magic power of knowledge".[1]

We must not lose sight of the fact that the Upanishads are really *practical* manuals of mystic teachings for those in quest of salvation. Deriving the word, *upanishad*, from the root *sad* with the prefix *ni* (to sit), Max Müller says, "The history and the genius of the Sanskrit language leave little doubt that the word Upanishad meant originally sessi[illegible] session consisting of pupils, assembled at a [illegible] round their teacher."[2] On the other hand, Deussen points out that the word means "secret" or "secret instructions" and that is borne out by many passages of the Upanishads themselves.[3] Both are right in that the instruction was imparted by those who knew the secret to pupils who were considered worthy of receiving and profiting by such esoteric teaching.

For the aim of the Upanishadic secret instructions was "not so much to reach philosophic truth as to bring peace and freedom to the anxious human spirit".[4] So says Radhakrishnan speaking in the language of higher religion. "Not for the mere joy of knowledge; not as an abstract speculation; but simply because they conceive such knowledge as a short-cut to the control of every cosmic power", contends Edgerton, taking his stand on his close study of the Upanishadic texts—as texts, and not as scripture.[5] Edgerton's position will be better understood if one realizes that his approach is that of a scientific, non-religious student of the language of the Hindu scriptures, which it is his purpose, like that of his teacher Maurice Bloomfield, to "humanize".

On the other hand, Rabindranath Tagore defends the decidedly

[1] F. Edgerton, *The Upanishads: What do they Seek, and Why?* Reprint from *J.O.A.S.*, vol. xlix, No. 2, p. 119.

[2] M. Muller, *Translation of the Upanishads*, S.B.E., V, i, p. 31.

[3] P. Deussen, *Philosophy of the Upanishads*, Clarke, London, 1906, pp. 10 ff.

[4] S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, I, p. 138.

[5] F. Edgerton, *J.O.A.S.*, vol. xlix, No. 2, p. 118.

religious interpreter: "It is not enough that one should know the meaning of the words and the grammar of the Sanskrit texts in order to realize the deeper significance of the utterances that have come to us across centuries of vast changes, both of the inner as well as the external conditions of life. Once the language in which these were written was living, and therefore the words contained in them had their full context in the life of the people of that period, who spoke them. Divested of that vital atmosphere, a large part of the language of these great texts offers to us merely its philological structure and life's subtle gesture which can express through suggestion all that is ineffable. Suggestion can neither have fixed rules of grammar nor the rigid definitions of the lexicon so easily available to the scholar. Suggestion has its unanalysable code which finds its depths of explanation in the living hearts of the people who use it".[1]

The sanity of Edgerton's position, and the true value of his interpretation of the fundamental attitude of the Upanishads can be duly appreciated if it is firmly understood that the spirit of scientific investigation (whatever that of a religious approach) is to take things at face value, in the light of "external conditions" without the added benefit of the "inner". He, therefore, bluntly calls "magical" what to religious intuition seems mystical, being constitutionally immune to what Tagore calls "religious suggestion".

Quite often in the Upanishads occurs a phrase that is also noticed in the Brāhmaṇas as well as in the Atharva Veda, viz. "he who knows thus", *yā evam veda* (or vidvān). Invariably some eminently practical reward, like long life or release from death, is promised to such as have this knowledge. This magic power of knowledge was also known to the Ṛig Vedic poets. But at that period it was the actual performance of the ritual that was generally held to be potent in securing man's desire for any specific thing or blessing. In the Brāhamaṇa period there grows the theory that both the esoteric knowledge and the overt performance of rites are equally potent. Here is a blend, a blend "between ritualistic religion on the one hand and magical philosophy or philosophical magic on the other. And, in this blend, ritualistic religion is the moribund element. Magical philosophy constantly tends to get the upper hand. We are drifting into the intellectual sphere of the Upanishads."[2]

The fundamental notion that knowledge about a certain thing gives the knower a control or possession over it and everything

[1] Tagore, in his Foreword to Radhakrishnan's *Philosophy of the Upanishads*, London, 1924, p. ix.

[2] F. Edgerton, *J.O.A.S.*, vol. xlix, No. 2, pp. 107–8.

with which it is identified [illegible] (vidyā) is power (śakti), not only persists in the [illegible] assumes the proportion of the whole universe. If to know is to have power to control the all, then one has to have knowledge of the all, the essence of everything that is.

The sixth chapter of the Chāndogya, for instance, sets out in the quest of that Vidyā, "knowing which all is known". It is defined as Sat, the "existent", that which is in everything. Indeed, everything, in the final analysis, is just that. And in the text it is stated: "What that subtle essence is, a state-of-having-that-as-its-essence is this universe, that is the real, that is the soul, that art thou (tat tvam asi)." This identification is to the Upanishadic thinker not an abstract truth. If the philosophic idealism to which it does lend itself strikes us today as a remarkable discovery, to him, by itself, it had no value. What was of value to him was the *benefit* he derived from the identification; from the naturalistic standpoint "the satisfaction of all desires" and from the religious "peace and freedom to the anxious human spirit". To cite but one passage, in the Bṛihadāraṇyaka (I, 4, 10 and 15); "whatever *knows* that 'I am Brahman' *becomes* this all" and "from the same self he (who knows thus) creates whatsoever he desires".

When all is said and done, the main objective of the Upanishads is certainly to instruct in this knowledge, the *vidyā* which is a power that controls human destiny, in the final analysis, whether that power be conceived of as magical or mystical. In the soteriology of the later classical Vedānta the *vidyā* still functions. And what is more, there is also an *a-vidyā*, not merely a lack of the saving knowledge, but a "positive ignorance" that functions as a cosmic power deluding men about the true nature of their destiny.[1] Indeed, the world of relative reality, the Māyā of this phenomenal universe, is due to it. And oftentimes the very word māyā is used synonymously with Avidyā.[2] If knowledge as power makes for emancip[illegible]otent, makes this world of saṁsāra [illegible] deaths), and effectively prevents man's release. And, in either case, the power does seem to work "magically", *ex opere operato*.

2

THE UPANISHADIC BRAHMAN

Whatever the specific objective of the Upanishadic quest, there is little division of opinion as to the central thesis of these treatises.

[1] *Śankarabhāshya*, *S.B.E.*, xxxiv, p. 324. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 243.

However Brahman and Ātman may be interpreted, there is little doubt that they together were meant to convey the essence of all that is. This Brahman-Ātman singularism is dominant and pronounced throughout the heterogenous mass of Upanishadic material. But no single articulated system of thought is worked out; the treatises as a whole form a melting-pot in which all the later philosophical ideas of the classical Darśanas are still in a state of fusion—a repository, as it were, of diverse currents of thought in various stages of development.

This singularism of the Upanishads lends itself to various interpretations. The strongest current of thought which finds expression in a majority of the texts, that the Brahman alone is the only reality, besides which all else is unreal, is undoubtedly a monism. The other current of thought provides the basis for a pantheism, identifying the universe with the Brahman-Ātman. The third, by making Brahman Lord and creator of the universe, lays the foundation for a decided theism.

At any rate, there is an attempt at reaching forth for the First Principle of the universe, a unitary world-ground. Indeed, this is really a continuation of the same project hinted at in the later books of the Ṛig Veda and on through the rest of the Vedic literature.

The term employed in the Upanishads for the one behind the many is Brahman. In the Ṛig Veda the word means concretely "hymn", "prayer", "incantation", "magic formula", "sacred knowledge", etc.[1] It is not relevant to our purpose here to show how this term comes to be applied to the Upanishadic concept of the world-ground. What is more essential for us is to find out what it is meant to convey.

There are attempts made to define the term in several dialogues. Naturally the early cosmologies of the pre-Upanishadic thought still colour the idea of the Brahman. It is significant that Yājñavalkya in his conversation with Gārgī begins with the idea of water and ends with the "worlds of Brahma", (Bṛih., III, 6) and thence permits no questioning. Both in Bṛih., I, 10–11, and in Maitri., 6, 17, there is a statement to the effect that in the beginning this world was Brahman. In the conversation between Bālāki and Ajātaśatru, the learned king, after a similar process of elimination of all of Bālāki's definition as partial, finally includes them all when he says: "He, verily, O Bālāki, who is the maker of all these (whom you have mentioned in succession) of whom, verily, this is the work—he, verily, should be known" (Kaush., 4, 19). In another version, Ajātaśatru draws the conclusion, "As a spider might come out with his thread, as small sparks come forth

[1] Cf. R.V., VI, 38, 3; VI, 69, 4; VIII, 32, 27. A.V., III, 6, 8; III, 2, 5.

from the fire, even so from this Soul come forth all vital energies, all worlds, all gods, all beings. The mystic meaning of which is 'Real of the real' " (Brih., II, 1, 20).

In Briḥ., IV, 1–2, Yājñavalkya is obviously trying to show that the Brahman is assumed to be manifest in the psychic activities of man. Its seat is in the sense-organ and in the mental organs. It has various attributes, like intelligence, endlessness, blissfulness, etc., but these qualities do not limit it. So in the instruction which Sanatkumāra gives to Nārada in Chāndogya, VII, 1, everything is finally traced to the Ātman which is evidently conceived of as a manifestation of the Brahman. In Chāndogya, III, 18, 1–2, the whole scheme of the universe, the functions of the self as well as the functions of the gods that are responsible for natural phenomena, is brought under the single concept of the Brahman. Therefore, it says, "One should reverence the mind as Brahma. Thus with reference to the self (the Ātman). Now with reference to the divinities (evidently responsible for natural phenomena). One should reverence space as Brahman. . . . The Brahman has four quarters. One quarter is speech. One quarter is breath. One quarter is the eye. One quarter is the ear. Thus with reference to the self. Now with reference to the divinities. One quarter is Agni (Fire). One quarter is Vāyu (Wind). One quarter is Āditya (the sun). . . ."

These quotations from the Upanishads give us a working idea of the Brahman. All the previous theories about the ultimate principle, like water, air, etc., are now brought into the more universal and unitary principle of the Brahman. It is not only thought of as pervading everything, but it actually is everything, on ultimate analysis. This merging of all objective phenomena by the characteristic Indian method of identification is by no means to be accepted as already a systematized exposition of philosophic monism. The Brahman is also regarded sometimes as the cause of the world, the primal entity from which all came to be, by which all was procreated (Chānd., 6, 3), and so, in a sense, different from the world. Sometimes, it is identified with everything, and thus it *is* everything ultimately.

Brahma, indeed, is this immortal. Brahma before,
  Brahma behind, to the right and to the left.
Stretched forth below and above,
  Brahma indeed, is this whole world, this widest extent.
Muṇḍ., II, 2, 11.

Or, as is stated in Mānd., II, "For truly, everything here is Brahma."

When Śvetaketu returned from his teacher's house, proud, self-

satisfied, and thinking himself learned, his father asks him whether his teacher has taught him the knowledge of the Ultimate Existent, "by hearing which everything that is not heard becomes heard, by thinking which everything that is not thought becomes thought, by knowing which everything that is not known becomes known". Śvetaketu admits his [illegible] and asks to be instructed in it. Whereupon his [illegible] Āruṇi tells him: "Just as by a knowledge of a lump of clay comes to be known whatever is made of clay, all this being a matter of words, a modification and a name, the ultimate substratum of it all being clay; just as, by one copper ornament all that is made of copper becomes known, all this being merely a word, a modification and a name, the ultimate substratum of it all being copper; just as by the knowledge of a pair of scissors everything made of steel becomes known, all this being merely a word, a modification and a name, the ultimate substratum of it all being steel" (Chānd., VI, 1, 4–6), similarly, when any part of Brahman is known, the whole of it is known, the ultimate substratum of it all being Brahman itself, which is self-identical, self-subsistent, and self-known.

R. E. Hume, in his outline of the philosophy of the Upanishads, points out that there are two stages in the Upanishadic development of thought towards the concept of the First Principle, the Brahman.[1] First a theory which postulated a world-ground that embraced all phenomena as parts of it, and so which gradually identified everything with the world-ground. Then, in the second place, a feeling that this world-ground was in some sense a Soul related to the finite Ego. Indeed, the gist of the Upanishadic dogmatic theories is involved in the equation "Ātman = Brahman", the individual Ego is the same as the Ultimate Reality.

In a previous section, attention was drawn to the anthropo-analogical thought of the Vedic period. The Hindu still persists, even in the Upanishads, in thinking of the world around him as a huge human being: he thinks of the parts of the Macrocosm, in terms of the parts of the Microcosm, as in Chānd., III, 18, 2, where Brahma, on the basis of the human analogy, is fourfold: speech, breath, eye, ear which, in turn, are described as fire, wind, sun and the four quarters, in terms of natural phenomena.

Once this method of analogy gains currency, what more logical than for the Vedic poet to equate that which is considered the innermost essence of the human organism with the *Sat* (the ultimate reality) of the whole scheme of things? There is reason to think that the term Ātman originally meant "vital breath". But it does also seem to mean the ultimate essence or reality in man, at least in one passage in the Ṛig Veda. And here, by the method

[1] *Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, Oxford, 1931, p. 21.

of comparison indicated above, Ātman is used to signify the innermost self of the world. "Who has seen how the first born, being bone-possessing (the shaped world) was born from the boneless (the shapeless)? Where was the vital breath, the blood, the self (Ātman) of the world? Who went to ask him that knows it?"[1] Obviously, for quite a long time before the Upanishadic period, the term Ātman was used to signify the Self of the universe as well as the self of the individual. The meaning-content of the term, whether regarded as the self of the universe (vaiśvanara ātman) or when applied to the individual self, was by no means clearly defined. The Vedic poet was not yet capable of dealing in abstract concepts.

Six learned householders go to the far-famed Aśvapati to find out about the Ātman. Before he instructs them, he asks them each individually to present his own idea of the universal Ātman (vaiśvanara ātman). One says it is the sky, another the sun, the third the wind, the fourth space, the fifth water and the sixth the earth. Finally, Aśvapati tells them: "Verily indeed, you here eat food, knowing all this universal Ātman that is of the span (Śaṅkara suggests—from the earth to heaven)—thus (yet) is to be measured by (abhi-vi-māna) thinking of oneself—he eats food in all worlds, in all beings, in all selves. The brightly shining (heaven) is indeed the head of that universal Ātman. The manifold (sun) is his breath. The extended (space) is his body. Wealth (i.e. water, is indeed his bladder. The support (i.e. the earth) is indeed his feet . . ." (Chand., V, 18, 1–3).

Here is a new idea. The all-inclusive cosmic self is not only described in terms of the human self, but identified with it. The rationale of such an identification has been discussed before. What is of primary interest to us now is the *fact* of the identification. The two terms, Brahman and Ātman, are now used interchangeably, meaning the Ultimate Reality. "As all the spokes are held together in the hub and felly of a wheel, just so in this soul all things, all gods, all worlds, all breathing things, all selves are held together" (Bṛih., II, 5, 15). "Ātman alone is the whole world" (Chānd., VII, 25, 2.)

There are many texts in the Upanishads which definitely state that the Brahman–Ātman is the one, only Reality. Later students of these treatises find these so overwhelmingly abundant that to them the burden of the Upanishadic teachings is a singularism—which might be made the basis of a philosophic monism, or a religious mysticism transcending the "limited" God of attributes to the "numinous" Beyond which is also within. Others again find in the Upanishads a positive monotheism where

[1] R.V., I, 164, 4, also cf. Deussen, article on "Ātman" in *E.R.E.*

the personality of the human and the divine are kept far enough apart to make possible a religious relationship in which the objective reality of the Divine is as much a factor as the subjective realization of Him in human religious consciousness. Still others find the Upanishads definitely dualistic. And this dualism is made the basis of the later Sāṁkhyan atheism or the deism of Yoga. And, of late, there has been offered the naturalistic "magical" explanation, of the fundamental thesis of the earlier Upanishads at any rate, which might well be applied to the monistic development of later thinking, without in any way minimizing their intrinsic value, or the worth of their contribution to philosophy in general.

Just as the texts of the Upanishads are making "guesses at the truth", as Hume puts it, so we are guessing at the truth of these guesses in turn. Only, with more intelligence: in that we bring to our aid "higher" criticism as well as "lower" criticism, textual exegesis and historical imagination. But in all cases there is the constant danger of our reading into the texts meanings that we want them to convey, biased as we inevitably are apt to be by our own theorizings. Still, progress in interpretation seems to lie that way.

Radhakrishnan's brilliant exposition of the philosophy of the Upanishads, couched in the language of modern philosophy, is built upon the same texts that buttress the thesis of Edgerton who would resort to primitive magic for an adequate explanation of their purpose. But the truth need not be any one of these extremes by itself. It can be between both, that is so far as later systematization of the nascent dogmatic theories are concerned. But the difficulty comes in when we attempt to answer the question, "What did the Upanishads mean to the men of *that day*?"

All we seem justified in concluding is that in the Upanishads we do come across the idea of there being the One, whether it be termed the Brahman, or Sat (Existent) or Ātman (Self) or what not, which is considered as the essential self, the soul of the universe. And this is identified with the soul (Ātman) of the individual. Obviously the men of the age made much of this discovery. They thought of it as esoteric wisdom, a knowledge of which had immense potency to the "one who knows thus".

However this single principle of the universe is conceived of —monistically, theistically, or magically—"all this brahmaṇahood, all this kṣatriyahood, all these worlds, all these gods, all these beings, in fact, everything here is 'Ātman' ", says Yājñavalkya (Bṛih., II, 4, 6). And later in the same conversation with Maitreyī, he tells her, "It is only when there seems to be duality that one smells the other, that one sees the other, that

one hears the other, that one speaks about the other, that one imagines about the other, that one thinks about the other; but where the Ātman alone is, what and whereby may one smell, what and whereby one may perceive, what and whereby may one speak, what and whereby may one imagine, what and whereby may one think? He who knows all this, by what may anybody know him? He is the eternal knower, by what may he be known?" (Bṛih., II, 4, 14). So in the Chāndogya, III, 14, 1: "Verily, this whole world is Brahman. Tranquil, let one worship It as That from which he came forth, as That into which he will be dissolved, as that into which he breathes."

3

THE WORLD OF THE UPANISHADIC SEERS

It would have been unnatural for the Upanishadic thinker to have so far lost himself in the "substance" of the universe as to forget its "sum". He was not oblivious of the "manyness"—to use a term current in later Indian thinking—although he was conscious of the one, the Brahman, the Ultimate Reality. The fact that, in his anthropomorphic thinking, while he is comparing the self of the individual to the Self of the universe, he still persists in comparing other parts of the human organism with the various elements in the world around him, would lead us to think that he felt he had to account for the non-self also: as in the microcosm, so in the macrocosm.

Vaguely, if at all, the Upanishadic writers conceive of the soul of the universe as one absolute, static, eternal perfection, the "Existent", the Sat, the Being. A little less vaguely, they realize the non-self of the universe as multi-form (nāmarūpavat), dynamic, perishable material, the "a-sat", the Becoming. To modern interpreters of the dogmatic theories of the Upanishads the distinction seems so temptingly like the Kantian division of the noumenal and the phenomenal that they fill in the picture with other necessary details and make out the Upanishadic seers to be marvellous precursors of an out-and-out subjective idealism. Witness Deussen[1] and his pupil Prabhu Dutt Shastri.[2]

Our texts, on the other hand, show that the thought of the times was quite muddled and self-contradictory on what we might term the problem of Being and Becoming. Not only do the Upanishads apparently contradict each other because of this

[1] Deussen, *System of the Vedanta*, p. 48.
[2] P. D. Shastri, *Doctrine of Māyā*, p. 116.

knotty question, but even in the very same Upanishad there creep in many contradictions and inconsistencies. All of which becomes still more complicated because the underlying motive is *not* to find an adequate philosophical explanation, but to work out any explanation at all that will satisfy the religious urge of the seeker for liberation from the world of Karma-transmigration.

The Muṇḍaka, for instance, opens with the statement that Brahma, "as the first of the gods, created the world and disclosed the brahma-knowledge" (brahmavidyā). Following close upon this is a definition of the Brahma, as imperishable source of all things.

Eternal, all-pervading, omnipresent, exceedingly subtle;
That is the Imperishable, which the wise perceive as the source of beings.
As a spider emits and draws in (its thread)
As herbs arise on the earth,
As the hairs of the head and body from a living person,
So from the Imperishable arises everything here

. . . . .

He who is all-knowing, all-wise,
Whose austerity consists of knowledge—
From Him (Masculine) are produced the Brahma (neuter) here (namely) name and form and food.

Muṇḍaka, I, 1, 7–9.

Then in the second section both the existent "sat" and the non-existent, "a-sat" are brought together.

Manifest (yet) hidden; called "Moving-in-secret";
The great abode: therein is placed that
Which moves and breathes and winks.
What that is, know as Being (Sat-Existent), the real self of the universe) and non-Being (a-sat, that which is other than the Self of the universe, "the Becoming")
As the object of desire, higher than the understanding
As what is the best of creatures!

That which is flaming, which is subtler than the subtle,
On which the worlds are set, and their inhabitants—
That is the imperishable Brahma,
It is life (Prāṇa), and it is speech and mind.
That is the real. It is immortal.

Muṇḍaka, II, 2, 1 and 2.

And later in the same khaṇḍa it is said:

In the highest golden sheath,
Is Brahma without stain, without parts.
Brilliant is It, the light of lights—
That which knowers of the Soul (Ātman) do know:

Ibid., II, 2, 10.

This last statement in the verse quoted above would probably, then, mean that the Self of the Universe, the Brahma, the Sat, the Ultimate Reality as such is only known to those who know that there is some such thing as the self of the individual, the substantial element in him, corresponding to the cosmic sat, on the analogy of the prevalent anthropocentric thinking of the day.

More striking are the contradictions in the Bṛihadāraṇyaka. The second brāhmaṇa (section) opens with the surprising statement: "In the beginning nothing whatsoever was here. This (work) was covered over with death, with hunger—for hunger is death" (Bṛih., II, 1). But curiously enough the brāhmaṇa opens with the teaching that "In the beginning this world was Soul (Ātman) alone in the form of a person. Looking around he saw nothing else than himself. He said, 'I am.' Thence arose the name 'I'. Therefore even today, when one is addressed, he says first just 'It is I' and then speaks whatever name he has" (Bṛih., I, 4, 1). Here we seem to get a clue as to how the abstract idea of the soul of the universe is reached through the concrete consciousness of the changeless, existent reality of the "I" in man.

But the brāhmaṇa goes on in the subsequent verses to relate how the Self splits itself into halves, "Therefrom arose a husband (pati) and a wife (patni). Therefore this (is true): 'Oneself (sva) is like a fragment', as Yājñavalkya used to say. Therefore this space is filled by a wife" (Bṛih., I, 4, 3). The seventh verse of the same brāhmaṇa reads: "Verily, at that time the world was undifferentiated. It became differentiated just by name and form, as the saying is: 'He has such a name, such a form.' Even to-day this world is differentiated just by name and form as the saying is: 'He has such a name, such a form.' " (Bṛih., I, 4, 7).

The rest of the chapter is devoted to the creation of castes among men, of law (dharma) or order, of the gods, of "all created things". All this leads up to the very definite statement made in Bṛih., II, 3, 1, viz. that there are assuredly two forms of the Brahma. Keeping still the analogy of the human and the divine (or cosmic) in view, there is a distinction drawn between the formed and the unformed; the mortal and the immortal; the stationary and the moving; the actual and the "yon". This idea is confirmed in Maitri., VI, 15, which reads: "There are assuredly two forms of Brahma: Time and Timeless. That which is prior to the sun is the Timeless (a-kāla), without parts (a-kala). But that which begins with the sun is Time, which has parts."

This division of the Brahman into the Higher and Lower is

perhaps what is referred to as the Higher and the Lower Brahman in Praśna V, 2, and the Muṇḍaka, I, 2, where "brahmavidyā" is said to be of two kinds, "higher" and "lower".

Although the "higher" is nowhere clearly distinguished from the "lower" Brahman, the very many attempts to define the "higher" Brahman as something beyo[illegible] by the senses, as something which could only [illegible], Neti" "Not thus, Not so" (Bṛih., II, 3, 6), would lead us to think that the "lower" Brahman is really that which is grasped by the sense. Perhaps this is the world of nature. The Upanishadic thinker was no systematic philosopher. He does not tell us that in so many words, but (as in the passage quoted from the Bṛihadāraṇayaka I, 4, above) he somehow makes this "lower" Brahman responsible for the world of men, nature and the gods. He assumes that just as his "self" (the changeless "existent" in him, on which he built, by analogy, the cosmic self, the Brahma, the Sat) is related to the whole man (the dynamic "non-existent" himself which is obviously compared to the "bone-possessing" world of the senses), so the "higher" and the "lower" Brahman are ultimately one and the same. To say that, to the Upanishadic thinker, there is no duality (advaityam) would not necessarily mean that he was a rigorous monist.

Prof. Radhakrishnan maintains: "The Upanishad doctrine is distinguished by its resolute devotedness to fact. Its highest principle or God is the eternal spirit which transcends and includes the objective world and the subjective man. In the highest state there is only one Brahman. 'We see nothing else, hear nothing else, we know nothing else.' In the supreme illumination of the Soul we feel the oneness of subject and object, the relativity of the world and the non-ultimate nature of the oppositions. . . . The unreflecting consciousness hastily assumes that the finite world is absolutely real. This is not so. The forms and energies of the world are not self originated or self-maintained. There is something behind and beyond them. We must sink the universe in God, the finite in the infinite, the real of the uncritical perception in the Brahman of the intuition."[1]

This might be. But the fact is (as Radhakrishnan himself elsewhere rightly points out) the Upanishads are more concerned with the Brahma *vidyā*, the esoteric knowledge that made it possible for man to attain salvation.[2] The Upanishadic seeker had above all an eminently practical purpose. If the distinction between the Sat and a-sat, the "existent" and the "non-existent" and their ultimate non-duality interested him at all, it was because he wanted the "brahma-vidyā" which was a power

[1] Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, i, p. 196. [2] *Ibid.*, i, p. 138.

unto salvation, as he, like Nāciketas, desired to avoid the tragedy of:

> Those abiding in the midst of ignorance (avidyā),
> Self-wise, thinking themselves learned,
> Running hither and thither, going around deluded,
> Like blind men led by one who is himself blind.
>
> Kaṭha, II, 5.
>
> Manifoldly living in ignorance,
> They say to themselves, childishly, "We have accomplished our aim!"
>
> . . . . .
>
> Therefore when their worlds are exhausted, they sink down wretched.
> Thinking sacrifice is the chiefest thing
> Naught better to do they know—deluded!
>
> . . . . .
>
> They re-enter this world or a lower.
>
> Muṇḍaka, I, 2, 9–10.

So the Brahman (the student) is advised to distinguish between this *vidyā* and *a-vidyā*. And the latter is not ignorance in general, but ignorance of a particular *vidyā* which, at least in passages quoted above, is placed over against the actual, "bone-possessing", world. It is expressed in Vedic ritualism; it leads to a perishable and precarious salvation, as against the eternal bliss which *vidyā* alone gives.

In the passage cited from the Kaṭhopanishad (which also appears in the Muṇḍaka), this state of *avidyā* is compared to "blindfoldness", a "delusion". In another passage in the same Upanishad there is an allusion to the "knot of *avidyā*".

> He who knows That, set in the secret place (of the heart)
> He, here on earth, my friend, rends asunder the knot of ignorance.
>
> Muṇḍaka, II, 1, 10.

In the famous prayer of the Bṛihadāraṇyaka this *avidyā* is the "darkness" of those still concerned with the non-existent (a-sat) world of becoming, leading to "death," not "immortality":

> From the a-sat (the world of becoming) lead me to the sat (the Existent, the Real)
> From darkness lead me to light:
> From death lead me to immortality.
>
> Bṛihad, I, 3, 28.

In Chāndogya, VIII, 3, there is a picturesque reference to the Brahma-world (Brahma-loka), obviously a state of static, perfect

bliss, which seems to have for its human analogue, in the anthropomorphic scheme of Upanishadic thought, the state of "deep sleep". The "one who knows thus" probably realizes that this state of deep sleep is the *loka*. But the rest, "just as those who do not know the spot might go over a hidden treasure of gold again and again, but do not find it, even so all creatures here go day by day to the Brahma world (in deep sleep), but do not find it; for truly they are carried by what is false (anṛita)" (Chānd., VIII, 3, 2).

In the Praśnopanishad, the seeker is advised to rid himself of crookedness and falsehood and māyā if he would attain *Brahmaloka*.

> To them belongs in stainless Brahma world
> In whom there is no crookedness and falsehood, no māyā (illusion).
>
> Praśna, I, 16.

Here, for the first time, the state of *avidyā* is described as Māyā which is used synonymously with the other terms in describing avidyā [illegible], darkness, and falsehood (anṛita).

But what of the things in the world, did they "exist" for the Upanishads; did the world of sensible objects have any metaphysical reality? On the face of it, it is too sophisticated a question to ask of the religiously minded Upanishadic thinker. Still, there seems to be evidence that he attempted to answer some such question in his own way. There is a classical section in the Chāndogya which holds that just as all things which are made out of clay, copper and iron respectively are only modifications of the original substance, a matter of words (vācārambhaṇam), a change (vikāraḥ), a name (nāmadheya), all things in this world are of one Reality (Chānd., VI, 4, 6).

All this implies that things of clay, copper and iron are ultimately known by what is the "existent" in them, viz. the respective metals of which they are made. So everything else in this universe should be referred back to the Sat of the universe. Śvetaketu's father wants him to acquire this knowledge of tracing all ultimately to the Sat—and not to the a-sat—"To be sure", says the father, "there are some people who say that the world was just *a-sat* in the beginning, and that out of it was produced *sat*" (Chānd., VI, 2, 1). He goes on to deny dogmatically that this could have been, and affirms emphatically the dogma: "On the contrary, my dear, in the beginning this world was just Being, one only, without a second" (Chānd., VI, 2, 2).

Macdonnel explains that this really means: God is all. If so,

the contrary is also true, that all is God. The Upanishads, he concludes, are pantheistic.[1] Radhakrishnan holds that the passage would at best imply that all is *in* God and *not* that all *is* God.[2] It would, then, not be a pantheism that equates the world with God, or any type of monistic idealism that would deny the existence of the world to affirm the sole reality of the Ultimate. Much less is it a dualism.

But Oldenberg thinks otherwise. Arguing from the similes of salt and water, fire and sparks, spider and thread, flute and sound, employed by the Upanishads to represent the relation of the Brahman to the world, he says: "We can detect behind these similitudes by which men strove to bring the living power of the Ātman in the universe near to their understanding, a conviction, of the existence of an element, in things separated from the Ātman. The Ātman, says the Indian, pervades the universe, as the salt the water in which it has dissolved, but we may easily go on to add as a complement to this, that although no drop of the salt water is without salt, the water continues to be something separately constituted from the salt. And thus we may infer the Ātman, is, to the Indian, certainly, the sole actuality, light diffusing, the only significant reality in things, but there is a remainder left in things which he is not."[3]

Deussen,[4] on the other hand, thinking all the time in terms of the later Advaita Vedānta, explains away such passages which declare the world to be rooted in Brahman as a concession to the empiric consciousness. In other words, he sees in such passages the influence of the doctrine of Māyā. The doctrine of the illusoriness of the phenomenal universe, according to him, is already assuming very definite form. Whether this is so in the earlier Upanishads is open to question. For the precise nature of the world is nowhere clearly expressed in the earlier treatises, although there is undoubtedly a strong tendency towards an ultimate non-duality. But such advaitism might serve equally and effectively as a basis for pantheism which would make the world equally real as the Ultimate Principle behind it, or a theism which would make the world part of God, giving the phenomenal universe a relative validity. Or again, as Oldenberg points out, since duality is not absolutely denied it might even be interpreted to serve as the foundation for a metaphysical dualism, or even a pluralism with or without a theistic bias.

This is borne out by the evidence of the oft-quoted verse from

[1] Cf. Berridale, Keith, *Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas*, pp. 539 ff.
[2] Radhakrishnan, *Philosophy of the Upanishads*, p. 66.
[3] Cf. *Bṛih.*, IV, 5, 13.
[4] P. Deussen, *Philosophy of the Upanishads*, pp. 161 ff.

the later, syncretistic Upanishad, the Śvetāśvatara, which sums up the Upanishadic idea of the world, curiously enough, using the technical terms of the classical *darśanas:*

> Now one should know that Nature (prakriti) is illusion (māyā)
> And that the mighty Lord (Maheśvara) is the illusion-maker (māyin).
> This whole world is pervaded
> With beings that are parts of Him.
>
> Śvetāśvatara, IV, 8.

4

MĀYĀ IN THE UPANISHADS

"The opinion expressed by some eminent scholars", says Sir R. G. Bhandarkar, "that the burden of the Upanishadic teaching is the illusive character of the world . . . is manifestly wrong."[1] Hopkins is equally emphatic. "Is there anything in the early Upanishads to show that the authors believed in the objective world being an illusion? Nothing at all."[2] Nowhere in the entire literature of the Upanishads is expounded any dogmatic theory about the nature of the phenomenal world. Much less, specifically, is there any evidence of the teaching that the world of sensible things is all illusory.

Nevertheless, it cannot be said that Upanishadic theory contradicts the Māyā world-view. On the contrary, there are sufficient indications to show that several elements that later combined to form the doctrine are unmistakably present in all the Upanishads.

In the first place the world is both *sat* and *a-sat.* In later Vedānta, it is just for this reason the world is called māyā, a *mystery,* as mysterious as the performance of a magician. It is quite logical that a term that once stood for mysterious power (as did the word Māyā) to do more-than-ordinary-things, should later be applied not only for the thing produced objectively but also for the subjective state of mind—the delusion—of the onlooker. The very fact that the origin of the physical universe and of individual souls is left obscure in the Upanishads, adds to this sense of mystery.

The Upanishads obviously want the world to be both *sat* (existent) and *a-sat* (non-existent); not either *alone.* Yet, at the same time, they seek to avoid any trace of absolute duality, with-

[1] R. G. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣnavism, Śaivism and other Minor Cults,* p. 2 n.
[2] Hopkins, *J.O.A.S.,* xxii, p. 385.

out yielding on the point of its being both. This accounts for the puzzling narratives of the origin of the world. In all these "beginnings", the Brahman or the Ātman, as the case may be, is split into "halves", but not at the sacrifice of the integrity of the single Ultimate Principle, the "*sat*".

But what were this "sat" and "a-sat" that went to make up this world? These terms are usually translated "Real" and "Unreal" by both European and Indian writers, terms which in the English language are apt to be given many interpretations. Prof. F. Edgerton consistently translates the term "sat" as "the Existent", and gets nearer the mind of the Upanishadic writer. We pointed out before that much of the thinking of the Upanishads is surprisingly, and quite consistently, anthropomorphic. Even from early Vedic times the universe was thought of in terms of a huge man. Every natural phenomenon had its specific human analogue. Not only that; because of the resemblance they were sometimes related; and, according to the prevalent tendency of the times, they were identified. In analogy with the final essence of the human individual, the "vital breath", the soul, the Vedic thinker develops the idea of the Ātman of the universe, the Brahman, the Ultimate Reality.[1] The two Ātmans are related: what is more, they are identical. But the central thesis of the Upanishads is not the fact of the identity, but the "knowledge" of this oneness which gives the "knower" control over the universe.

Now, the term *Sat* implies the Ātman in the individual, and also the Brahman of the Universe. It is the "existent", that which "is", the Ultimate Principle, static, absolute, imperishable. The rest of the individual and the Universe, the Sat-plus is the a-sat. Whether we translate a-sat as the "unreal" or "the non-existent" we should bear in mind that it is intended to represent the perishable, changing, dynamic world of sensible things, the *vācārambhaṇam* (that which is caught hold of by words) the *vikāraḥ* (that which is a modification), the nāmadheya (that which has an appellation), all modifications of the "existent". To translate "a-sat" as Becoming against "sat" (Being) would perhaps make clearer the meaning of the Upanishads, especially in reference to the puzzling accounts of the origins of the world. From Being, according to the crude myth, Becoming comes into existence by a sort of self-bifurcation. Becoming is the female element and Being the male, and both take part in the creation of the world of things. Notice here also the thinking in terms of the human, and the fact that in the creation of the world the male Being needed the help of the female Creative Energy of Becoming, the latter having mysteriously originated from the former.

[1] *Mānd.*, III, 23; cf. *Chānd.*, VIII, 80, *Kaus.*, III, 3.

There is, then, no evidence to conclude that the world is in any sense "an appearance", without any basis of reality at all. In all the passages cited above in our investigation regarding the Upanishadic idea of the world, we have always found that the idea of the Brahman, the Ātman, the Ultimate Principle, the Existent-Sat, is an abiding element in it. But we are justified in concluding that there was a good deal of confusion in the thinking of the Upanishads caused by the realization that a unitary, absolute static background or substratum for the universe has somehow to be reconciled with the multiple, relative, dynamic world of sensible phenomena. This empirical necessity gives birth to the germ of thought that later develops into the doctrine of māyā in the classical Vedānta. The conclusion from the sole reality of the Brahman in the universe seems to have given the world a status of relative reality, and not that of a shadowy illusoriness, in Upanishadic times. For the world is raised on the foundations of the real Brahman.

In the second place, already there is a distinction drawn between "vidyā" and "a-vidyā"—the two kinds of "knowledge". Here again, the English rendering "knowledge" does not fully give the meaning of the Upanishadic "vidyā". It is not discursive knowledge based on reasoning. It is intuitive knowledge which gives a kind of power to the possessor of such knowledge. True, with the spiritualizing of the whole outlook of the men of that day the magical element in the term *vidyā* comes to be displaced by a distinctly mystical factor. But the automatic nature of the consequence, the immediacy of the *vidyā*, remains. It still continues to act *ex opere operato*. It is true of all mystics, of even later days—mighty minds many of them, and highly intellectual—who claim that the possession of this "higher" wisdom by the power inherent in the "wisdom" itself, without any effort on the part of the human mystic, makes them one with the Ultimate Reality. And once there, the mystic is in an ecstatic trance of ineffable joy, a state which he claims transcends all human categories. To say that the magical "vidyā" of the Upanishads was the original prototype of the superb mystic apprehension of Reality that was obviously an element in the religious experience of a modern Maharishi like Devendranath Tagore, for instance, is not to claim that the mysticism of the sainted Tagore was magic. Neither the validity nor the value of the mystic's experience is impugned by the historical fact of its lowly origins. The *vidyā* continues to be "knowledge unto power", whether in magic or mysticism, surpassing all categories of human reasoning. In the classical mysticism of the Vedanta, it is a "power", and so also in the magical philosophy of the Upanishads.

But *not* "avidyā"; not in the Upanishads, at any rate. It is true that the state of being ignorant is considered as though being blind, in the darkness, deluded and subject to a round of deaths. It signifies a negative state of not possessing the superior wisdom. Or, as Thibaut points out, "In several places we find the knowledge of the sacrificial part of the Veda with its supplementary disciplines contrasted as inferior with the knowledge of the Self.[1] . . . But a *formal* recognition of the essential difference of Brahman being viewed, on the one hand, as possessing distinctive attributes, and on the other hand, as devoid of all such attributes is not to be met with anywhere."[2] Since the later bifurcation between the *nirguṇa* Brahman and the *saguṇa* Brahman is nowhere evident in the Upanishads there is no corresponding division of the *vidyā* leading to the one or the other. Nor is there any distinction between the "transcendental" and the "empirical". But it is possible that the notion of the *vidyā* which led to the realization of Brahman could have led to the notion of the "avidyā" which prevented one getting there. Both the *vidyā* and the *avidyā* functioned "magically". And the later growth of the māyā doctrine on the basis of the Upanishad is quite intelligible. This does not mean, however, that the world to the Upanishadic thinker was unreal, as Śaṅkara interprets it.

The interpretation that Śaṅkara puts upon the Brahman–Ātman concept of the Upanishad and the theory of the world as an illusion that he propounds on the basis of the Brahman being the sole Reality—is, however, not altogether a "graft" on to the Upanishadic teachings, nor is it exactly a "growth".[3] From the standpoint of the historian, "the doctrine of Māyā", as M. Paul Regnaud indicates very pointedly, "could hardly become clear and explicit before the system had reached a stage of development necessitating a choice between admitting two co-existent eternal principles (which became the basis of the Sāṅkhya philosophy), and accepting the predominance of the intellectual principle, which in the end necessarily led to the negation of the opposite principle".[4]

God and the world of the religious approach; the Brahman and the non-Brahman of the sacrifice-concept; the Ātman and non-Ātman of the cosmic man (purusha), according to the anthropo-analogical point of view; the *Sat—a-sat*, Being and Becoming

[1] *Māṇḍūkya Up.*, I, 4.

[2] G. Thibaut, *Translation of Vedānta Sūtras with Śaṅkara's Gloss.*, *S.B.E.*, XXXIV, Oxford 1890, p. cxvi.

[3] A. E. Gough, *Philosophy of the Upanishads*, Cf. Thibaut, *S.B.C.*, xxxiv, pp. cxvi ff.

[4] P. Regnaud, "La Maya", in the *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, tome xii, No. 3, 1885.

notion of the non-religious speculative idea; all of these, we noticed as early as the Vedas, supply the material for Upanishadic thought. In the Upanishadic cauldron, far from being crystallized into "systems", they are still dripping in their liquidity. We can well see how they could be made the basis of a downright dualism, an unflinching monism, or a critical monism. But the development in either case is not altogether a "growth", as Gough would make it out to be.

Deepening speculation on Brahman would naturally lead to a monism taken more and more in the strict sense of the word. It would lead not only to the exclusion of any second principle, but the actual denial of validity to anything else but that sole, ultimate Brahman. The world would then be empirically real; but not metaphysically. Moreover, the spiritualizing of the notion of *vidyā*, leading to the mystic conception of the ultimate union with Brahman in which the seeker loses all identity, would logically lead to the conclusion that what separates us in our "unenlightened" state from Brahman is such as to allow itself to be completely sublated by an act of knowledge; in other words, that itself is [illegible] is in this sense the Māyā doctrine is a "growth [illegible] to the Upanishads, as indeed the whole system of the Vedānta.

Other elements naturally contribute to the "growth". This we shall see as we go on with our investigation. But as we come to the end of our study of Upanishadic material we find that the Upanishads do not teach that the world is an illusion. The monistic principle, however, of the sole reality of the Brahman is recognized, although there is not sufficient evidence for us to state just what the *nature* of that monistic principle was in the mind of the Upanishadic thinker. Certainly, he does identify his individual self or ego with this ultimate Ātman of the universe. The knowledge of this identity to him is a power unto salvation, "release" from the circuit of births and deaths involved in Karma-saṁsāra.

CHAPTER III

THE EPIC WORLD-VIEW

I

THE LITERATURE OF THE EPIC PERIOD

The national literature of every people passes through what is generally called the "heroic age", when the Muses and Mars collaborate to preserve historic tradition. Poetry gives the form and warfare provides the theme. "Warfare", says Chadwick, "is a state of affairs most commonly involved in historic stories . . . and this warfare almost invariably takes the form of hand-to-hand fighting and very frequently that of a series of single combats."[1] But it is not the national aspect of war which is given prominence. Emphasis is always laid upon individual heroism.

The conflict is much deeper than is apparent, as Chadwick has demonstrated in his comparative study of the heroic age in world literature. The individual hero is breaking away from the traditional world of his times, blazing a trail into a new world of different ideals. The adolescent is growing into early manhood. This transition is invariably accompanied, and is sometimes even caused, by the clash of ideals, of two cultures, each striving for domination.

This is eminently true also of the Epic age in India. In the Hindu Epics, Dravidian culture is at war with the Aryan. The frankly polytheistic outlook and the Bhakti mysticism of the Dravidian religion, with its outspoken theory of incarnation (avatār) was evidently becoming Brahmanized. Modern Hinduism was now emerging; with its characteristic latitude of beliefs, creeds and customs. The Aryan element, still represented by the Brahman priestly caste, was not only yielding to these popular conceptions with a view to strengthening its superior hold over the non-Aryan and the Aryo-Dravidian elements of the population thereby; it was also actually advocating the new trends of thought.

Whatever historical value the epic literature may have, it does not lie in its loosely strung together didactic teachings, irrelevant episodes and artificial battle scenes. Its importance is rather in the evidence it affords of the widespread prevalence of beliefs and creeds, mixed and moulded, through centuries of interpenetration, to form the national culture of the mass of Aryan and non-Aryan people, who henceforth become Hindus.

[1] M. M. Chadwick, *The Heroic Age*, Cambridge, 1912, pp. 440–41.

This process of synthesis, the assimilation of two warring cultures, was undoubtedly spread over many centuries in Indian history. This is indicated by the different, almost self-contradictory, lines of thought which we find presented in the Hindu epics. So far as the literary nature of the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata are concerned, the passage of time has produced unfortunate effects on their form and content. "The tale, the language and the verse . . . have been subjected to an evening process, irregularly applied since the first poem was put together . . . ; great liberty being taken both by reciters and copyists, the establishment of the text by commentators proving no bar to occasional alterations and additions. Such changes were not introduced of set purpose, but incidentally and illogically. The same tale was told not in identical language but with slight variations; intrusions were not shunned; grammatical and metrical forms were handled freely but with no thorough revision of form or sustained attempt at harmonizing incongruities of statement."[1] So that the Epics, as we now have them, are strange episodes, didactic discourses and quasi-philosophic expositions organized round a nucleus, now quite obscure.

No doubt the original nucleus was a story, both in the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa; it is more easily traced in the case of the latter. The story is of the prince, Rāmā, thrown into exile by a scheming step-mother so that her own son becomes heir apparent. The banished prince, accompanied by his faithful wife, Sītā, and Lakshmaṇa, his loyal brother, wanders from end to end of India. The most perilous of his adventures is the encounter with the demon Rāvaṇa who carries away Sītā to Lanka (Ceylon) With the help of the king of monkeys, Hanuman, the distracted husband recovers his wife. But soon after he becomes doubtful of her fidelity to him. The chastity of Sītā is proved by a kind of ordeal by fire and the reunited pair return to Oudh, where Rāmā, no more an exile, is enthroned as king. The seventh book, which is probably a later addition, makes Rāmā again suspicious of Sītā: he insists on purgation and oath, and banishes her. The faithful Sītā invokes the goddess Earth to open her bosom to receive her, and as Sītā vanishes into the ground, her honour is vindicated.

The Mahābhārata is much more composite. The main theme of that epic is "the great war" between two rival tribes, the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas, the brothers of the latter tribe being all married to one wife. Several episodes of ethical and religious value are superimposed upon this central theme; and thus the didactic and the philosophic elements later come to be regarded as of more importance than the heroic story.

[1] Hopkins, *The Great Epic of India*, Scribners, 1901, p. 401.

The Bhagavad Gītā which is even to-day, perhaps, the most valued scripture of the devout Hindu, forms one whole section of the Mahābhārata. In the Gītā, Krishṇa, the incarnation of Vishṇu, enters into an argument with Arjuna, the warrior chieftain. Hesitant on the field of battle, Arjuna debates whether he shall fight and kill his adversaries, doing his military duty; or, because of his compassion and love for them, who after all are his kin, refrain from bloodshed and give up the fight. Krishṇa reminds Arjuna of his duty: it is right for one to do his duty, indifferent to one's feelings. For, after all, who kills and who is being killed? The real stuff of which man, in the final analysis, is composed, the Ātman, is imperishable. The body dies but the soul abides: its immortality is not secured by the merit of works (karma); it is [illegible] devotion (bhakti) to God (incarnate in Krishṇa), [illegible] a disciplined frame of mind (yoga), equanimous, serene alike in the enjoyment of pleasure and in pain; fulfilling all the duties of one's social status (svadharma) in an attitude detached from all passions, desires and feelings (nishkāmakarma).

We do not know exactly when the Mahābhārata was composed, but we have reason to believe that it is very ancient. Barth claims that the epic is as "ancient in its [illegible] traditions of the nation".[1] Weber thinks that [illegible] saga (not the epic itself), in its fundamental parts extends to the Brāhmaṇa period.[2] As it is, however, we have no standard text of this composite work. The Bhandarkar Institute at Poona calculates that there are 1284 MSS of the Mahābhārata and the Harivaṁsa: and of these only a few contain the whole work. Hopkins, who has done more scholarly research in this field than any other modern student, holds that the time of the epic, generally speaking, may be from A.D. 200–400.[3] And Frazer quotes Bühler and Kirste as maintaining in their *Contribution to the Study of the Mahābhārata*, that "it has been conclusively shown that the poem was recognized in A.D. 300, and by A.D. 500, was essentially the same as it now exists".[4]

MĀYĀ AS USED IN THE EPIC LITERATURE

The word māyā was known to the Epic writers. We come upon many occurrences of it in the narrative of the Mahābhārata.

[1] Barth, *Indian Antiquary*, 1895, p. 71.
[2] Weber, *Episches im Vedischen Ritual*, p. 8.
[3] Hopkins, *The Great Epic of India*, Scribners, 1901, pp. 386 ff.
[4] Frazer, *Literary History of India*, Scribners, 1898, p. 215.

Invariably the term means the power of magically bringing into being forms or appearances that do not have any substantial existence. The form (rūpa) of any person or thing that cannot be accounted for in the natural order of events is attributed to māyā, magical, mysterious "power". In some cases this "power" is "divine" (daivi),[1] of the deities, or of God. In other cases it is due to *Indra-jāla*[2] or *Yoga*.[3]

Thus Krishṇa is requested to come "in the form in which he showed himself in the midst of the assembly, by the power of Māyā". (*Sabhāmadhye ca yadrūpam māyayā krtavānasi tat tathaiva punaḥ kṛtvā sārjuno mām abhidrava.*)[4] Through this power Krishṇa appears throughout the epics as a delusion-god *par excellence.* Among other marvellous feats of his magical prowess, at one time he confuses the enemy host by covering the sun with a veil of darkness.[5]

Also Draupadi, in her naïve attempt to explain the sad plight of her husband, says that God the creator delu[illegible]". (*mohayitvā*), and the power of his delusion [illegible] responsible for men deluding themselves (*ātmamāyā*) into causing one another's death (Mbh., III, 30, 32). But her husband rebukes her. "Fie, fie," says he, "don't speak so of the Lord, through whose grace the faithful gets immortality" (Mbh., III, 31, 42); for these things are divine mysteries. "The divinities are full of sècret tricks (*gūḍhamāyā hi devatāḥ*, III, 31, 35–37) which are understood only by the twice-born and the disciplined, etc." (*prasādāır manasāir uktah paśyanty etāni vāi dvijāḥ*).

Krishṇa himself says in the Gītā:

> Nor am I visible to all, wrapt up in my magical power;
> this world deluded recognizes Me not,
> unborn, everlasting.
>
> Gītā, VII, 25.

Or again,

> Though I am unborn, the Soul that passes not away, though I am the Lord of beings, yet as Lord over My natures, I become manifest through the magical power of my own (atmamāyā).
>
> Gītā, IV, 6.

In XII, 337, 44–48, at a service of worship according to the Pancharātra rites, Hari (God incarnate in Kṛishṇa) appeared, but they were not able to see him. So stupefied were they by his māyā that they could not behold him. God is directly associated with all this mystery of the world when (in XIII, 339, 3 ff.) he is

[1] E. W. Hopkins, *The Great Epic of India*, pp. 138 ff.
[2] *Mahābhārata*, V, 160, 54–58; cf. *Gitā*, VII, 35.
[3] *Ibid.*, V, 160, 55.
[4] *Ibid.*, VII, 146, 68.
[5] *Ibid.*, V, 160, 55.

called among other things "Mahāmāyādhāra". And in XII, 340, 43–45, what Nārada sees of God is the avatār, an incarnation of the Lord as a person which is definitely explained as only a creation of his māyā: *māyā hy eṣa māyā srshta vān mam paśyasi.* The "māyā" here was a form, an incarnation of God that Nārada beheld. It was not a cosmic Māyā, not the Māyā of the world.

Although it is possible to read into the word the meaning later given it by Śaṅkara, yet the simpler translation as "trick" or "delusion" seems quite adequate. The delusion comes about through the relation between individual souls and God, but it is God that is naïvely made responsible for it. In any case, the māyā is mysterious and inexplicable.

To the popular religious mind of the Epics, then, it would seem that Māyā was the *mysterious power* of God which, curiously enough, functions in two contrary ways. On the one hand, it helps reveal the Īśvara to the world of men, and, on the other, it hides from the human mind the real nature of the individual's relation to the eternal Brahman. The sinner is deluded by "Vishṇu's hundred māyās" (XII, 302, 59). This delusion is merely a confusion of mind in regard to the soul's relation to the Brahman. It is not suggested that the sinner can divest himself of the illusion. The māyā concept adequately explains to the popular mind the inability on the part of the unenlightened to understand the ways of God. God is māyā (mystery); what appears of Him in the world is His "Mystery" (Māyā); and all things that happen in the world, since they must be due to Him, and as they seem inexplicable to the human mind, are also "mystery" (māyā). And all these mysteries which transcend the human understanding, the confusion of human intellect when it attempts to grapple with the ways of God, are explained as due to the māyā of God. This is how the popular religious mind thinks in the Epics. The power of God, his *māyā śakti*, more than God himself is, for the Epic mind, the chief factor in religious experience. Māyā reveals to the world of men the Unmanifest, Eternal, Imperishable Brahman. The animism of the Dravidian is thus reconciled with Brahmanic speculation; non-Aryan animistic *śakti* is now the world-medium of the Upanishadic Brahman, which is essentially not of this world.

3

THE TANTRIK CULT OF MĀYĀ ŚAKTI

In the ferment of religious notions which characterized the epic period in India, many important religious movements

emerged, with the sanction of orthodoxy, out of the weltering confusion of creeds and beliefs thrown pell-mell into the "Mahābhārata pot-pourri". Of them, two important cults gain a very important place in later Hinduism. One is the Krishṇa-Vāsudeva-Vishṇu cult, and the other is the Kāli-Umā-Durga cult.

Mention is made of Durga worship in the earlier sections of the Bhīshmaparva in the Mahābhārata. No less a person than Krishṇa himself urges on Arjuna the need to pray to Durga for success. Many names are given to her: Kumāri (maiden), Kāḷi (black), Kapāli (the wearer of skulls), Mahākāḷi (the great destroyer), Caṇdi (the fierce), Kantaravāsini (the dweller in the forest). It is probable that originally she was a virgin goddess who was worshipped by the wild tribes of the Vindhyas. Later she becomes the wife of Śiva, one of the three chief gods who dominate the chaotic theology of the Epics; in later Hinduism Brahma (the Creator), and Vishnu (the Preserver), Śiva (the Destroyer) constitute the Trimūrti, the Divine Triumvirate. As Śiva's wife, Kāḷi, now called Uma, is characterized as Divine Energy. As such, she is worshipped by the Śakti cults in Hinduism even today.

In order that she might gain canonical recognition, attempts were made, even from very early times, to associate and identify her with several goddesses of the Ṛig Veda. One whole hymn, the Devisukta (R.V., 125), is claimed to be in honour of her. She is there described as the primal energy of life. We have already noticed how in the course of the cosmological speculations of the Vedic times and the period of the Upanishads a feminine counterpart of the Brahman is considered necessary. She is regarded as the *dynamic, creative, half-potent;* while the other half is the static, "absolute", and completely-at-rest Brahman.

To the naïve religious consciousness this śakti-half, the Māyā-śakti of God constituted the essential element in Brahman's Being. So to popular imagination, when Īśvara creates, he is dominated by the energy in the form of Vāk (speech); when he preserves, by that of Śrī or Lakshmi; when he destroys, by that of Durga. And it comes about that Śakti is the Īśvari, the source, support and end of all existence and life.

There is no gainsaying the fact that the origin of Śakti worship is non-Aryan. There is evidence to show that Śakti-worship prevailed from the very beginning of religious history in India. From the very earliest records of the Vedas, evidence is not wanting to show that Śakti-worship influenced the Aryan immigrants also. By the time the fusion of the Aryan and non-Aryan cultures is complete, Śakti worship as a religious cult even becomes orthodox. With the trend towards philosophical explanation of religious fundamentals, the śakti concept gains support from the classical

Vedānta; Māyā is rationally explained as the śakti of Brahman, and as such directly responsible for the world of change; being personalized in Durga, Kāḷi and Uma, it is worshipped as the Māyāśakti of Brahman.

In the Epics we find for the first time evidence of a new *religious* interpretation of Māyā which henceforth becomes the basis of a major cult in modern Hinduism. It lasts in the devotion of Svāmi Vivekananda, and finds a place in the philosophical interpretations of the Śaktivāda sects in Tantrik writings.

4

THE WORLD IN EPIC PHILOSOPHY

Not only does the term Māyā become current in popular religious terminology as the mysterious power of God, in the Epic age, but it assumes a new value in Hindu religious theory and practice. Māyā, as Īśvara's śakti, is the centre, from now on, of a distinct religious cult, which gains considerable influence in *popular* Hinduism. But what of the development of Hindu religious thought in the Epic age?

There was considerable progress in this direction also, during the Epic period. Epic philosophy, far from being chaotic, has indeed a fundamental unity in that it is pervaded "by the dominant deistic view of the age". Religious philosophy passed from pure idealism into a theistic dualism; it sought to relate the spirit of man with a personal God. At the same time, it accepted a form of dualism; such dualism, however, was not that of spirit and matter but of conditioned being or conscious intelligence as opposed to pure being. Since this conscious intelligence itself, though the only origin of all matter, is merely a form of mind, the dualism is not absolute.

Sāṁkhyan dualism of *purusha* (soul) and *prakṛiti* (matter) is modified by the Yoga theism of a personal God; both are subordinated to the Vedāntic claim of the ultimate oneness of Reality. The outcome is a dualism which tends towards a monism, and a monism that dissolves into a dualism. Such a position is inevitable where one's approach to the problem of philosophy is primarily religious. God has to be One, Ultimate; and yet man and the world he lives in are somehow different from God.[1]

On the whole, but not consistently, Epic philosophy is best described as a religious dualism. There are two eternal principles,

[1] Hopkins, *The Great Epic of India*, Scribners, 1915, pp. 85 ff.

Purusha and Prakṛiti. The former is "soul", the Ātman and the sat of Vedic thought; while the latter is material nature, matter conceived of as energy, including mental faculties, the non-Soul, the a-sat, everything that is other than the Ātman. But this dualism is not kept rigidly apart, because frequent attempts are made to explain both Purusha and Prakṛiti as aspects of the Ultimate Brahman. At times, Prakṛiti is represented as itself creating, under the control of Purusha;[1] at other times, it is Purusha that impels to activity the creative elements.[2] Elsewhere it is also mentioned that all activity rests with Prakṛiti; that Purusha never acts; that, if it considers itself as active, it is deluded.[3] In another place we are given to understand that although creation and destruction are the work of Prakṛiti, still Prakṛiti is only an emanation from Purusha into which it resolves itself from time to time.[4]

Material nature, or Prakṛiti, is accounted for in two different ways in the Gītā. The first account deals with it as a composite of three elements (guṇas): Goodness (sattva), Passion (rajas), and Grossness (tamas). The individual nature of every Prakṛiti-made creation in nature is determined by the proportion in which these three guṇas are compounded in it.[5] The second and later account is more elaborate. Out of undifferentiated matter (prakṛiti) there emerges first consciousness (buddhi), then self-consciousness (ahaṁkāra), then the mind or thought-organ (manas). With these are associated the five organs of sense and the five organs of action (speech, grasping, locomotion, evacuation and [illegible] [illegible]so the five "subtle" and the five "gross" elem[illegible]' elements are the stimulants that produce a corresponding response from the various sense-organs, as, for instance, sound as the object of hearing. The "gross" elements are earth, air, fire, water and ether. These components, along with the "undifferentiated" primordial matter of Prakṛiti composed in varying proportions, on the basis of the "guṇa-classification", make up the sum-total of the material nature of the world at large, and of the individual embodied souls in particular.

In the world of men, the *ahaṁkāra* of the individual, the organ of self-consciousness (which is itself part of matter, Prakṛiti), deludes itself into believing that all actions the individual indulges in are felt and reacted to by the ego, the Ātman, the Purusha. This confusion causes man to go on from life to life without attaining the *moksha* of release from transmigration. This state of confusion is not the "avidyā" of classical Vedānta, however:

[1] *Mahābhārata*, XII, 314, 12.
[2] *Ibid.*, XII, 315, 8.
[3] *Ibid.*, XII, 22, 15–16; cf. *Bhagavad Gītā*, VI, 37.
[4] *Ibid.*, XII, 303, 31 ff.
[5] *Bhagavad Gītā*, XIV, 6–8.

it is rather the "avidyā" of later Sāṁkhya. According to Sāṁkhyan thought this confusion is the outcome of human inability to discriminate between the active, restless Prakṛiti which has self-consciousness and the passive, absolute perfection of the Purusha. The "avidyā" of Vedānta, on the other hand, is a cosmic veil of ignorance which deludes men into believing that the non-Ātman (all that which is not the Brahman) is real. The "ignorance", *avidyā*, is of the monistic principle that Brahman alone is real: all else being [illegible]real.

But the Gītā, and [illegible] in general, recognizes the reality of the Prakṛit[illegible] material nature, the self: the Purusha is also real, "unmoved, unshakable, ever-lasting", "knower". All actions (Karma), and the resulting emotional reactions therefrom, do not *really* affect it. But, seemingly, due to the confusion of what we might call the egocentric predicament caused by self-consciousness or *ahaṁkāra*, the soul *appears* to enjoy pleasure and pain. As soon as an enlightened individual *mentally* abandons all action "the Embodied (the Ātman) sits at peace, self-controlled, in his nine-doored citadel (the body) and neither acts nor causes action at all".[1] And, thus "freed from birth, death, old age and sorrow, attains to immortality (nirvāṇa)".[2]

Such a pronounced dualism does not necessarily have to acknowledge a God. The two primordial principles, Purusha and Prakṛiti, are eternal in their own rights, and salvation would seem to be the separation of the inactive Purusha from the coils of the creative energy of Prakṛiti. Such a view, indeed, is taken by the later Sāṁkhyan philosophers. They are outspokenly atheistic; but nevertheless "religious", in that they are concerned about *moksha* or salvation from this world of *saṁsāra*, round of births.

The epic mind is popular, not academi[illegible] religious, not philosophic. The Gītā salvation is [illegible] strength of a religious relationship. But the moment the idea of God is brought into this dualistic outlook the dualism dissolves into monism. "There is nothing else", says the Gītā, "that is outside of Me; on Me this all is strung like necklaces of pearls on a string."[3] "I am the moisture in the waters, the light in the moon and sun, the sacred syllable 'Om' in all the Vedas, sound in the ether, manliness in men. The goodly odour in the earth am I, and the brilliance in the fire; I am the soul in all beings, and austerity in ascetics. Know me as the eternal seed of all creatures. I am the intelligence of the intelligent, the glory of the glorious."[4] These

[1] *Bhagavad Gītā*, VII, 7.
[2] *Ibid.*, VII, 8–10; cf. X, 12–15, XVIII, 61, etc.
[3] *Ibid.*, VII, 7.
[4] *Ibid.*, VII, 8–10; cf. XVI, 12–15, XVIII, 61.

and similar passages in the Gītā would mean, then, that the ultimate world-ground is after all but one. The world is *in* God. But God is not the world. Here once again is what Rudolph Otto calls a Theopantism: not a Pantheism.

Such a position is decidedly advantageous to the religious solution of the problem of theodicy. Even at the expense of logic, God must not be made responsible for the presence of evil in this world. And the realism of the Gītā cannot deny the presence of evil. If God is the source of everything, then evil also must be from Him. So the Gītā takes care to make it clear that God is *not* the source of everything in the world. If He is the "strength of the strong" it is only in so far as that strength is "free from lust and passion"; if He is "desire in all beings", it is only of such "desire" as is "opposed to unrighteousness".[1]

The Gītā frequently uses the Upanishadic Brahman to convey its idea of God. Obviously it wants to claim the sanction of orthodoxy and the authority of the Upanishads for its teaching about God. It is fully aware that the Upanishadic Brahman is an impersonal Absolute: and that the religious devotion of *bhakti mārga* demands, on the contrary, a personal God. Fully conscious of this difference, it offers a daring compromise, with characteristic Hindu latitude. "Those who fix their minds upon Me (the personal God incarnate in Kṛishṇa) and revere Me with constant devotion, pervaded with supreme faith, them I consider best-disciplined. But those who revere the Imperishable . . . they too reach Me after all. Greater is the toil for those who fix their minds on the Unmanifest. For the unmanifest path is hard for embodied creature to attain."[2]

From the standpoint of religious epistemology the impersonal, unmanifest Brahman and the personal God are arbitrarily fused into One, "the beginningless Brahman which consists of Me (literally, that is *made* of Me)",[3] that is the impersonal-personal, composite Ultimate. It is immovable, yet moving; it is both far and near. It is in all beings, undivided and yet divided, as it were.[4]

In the Gītā philosophy we can distinguish *three* conceptions of God and Reality. There is, first, the idea of the Ultimate which is a synthesis of the manifest and the unmanifest, the personal and the impersonal—a synthesis which would include both and transcend both. Then, there is definitely acknowledged the concept of an absolute, eternal, imperishable Being, obviously a continuation of the Upanishadic First Principle. And, finally, there is the doctrine of the personal God; to Him, the practice of religious

[1] *Bhagavad Gītā*, VII, 11.
[2] *Ibid.*, XII, 1–5.
[3] *Ibid.*, XIII, 13.
[4] Cf. *Bhagavad Gītā*, XIII, 12–17.

devotion is advocated, as much the better way of securing release from transmigration.

In the absolute, static perfection of the Ultimate, the Gītā asserts, there is potentially (but undifferentiated) the essence of the impersonal and the personal God. Ultimate monism in any form is really incipient dualism. God, the soul of the universe, the Ātman of the cosmic man (the Purusha of Gītā dualism), is indeed differentiated from God that is *not* the soul of the universe, the body of the cosmic man (Prakṛiti), material nature, which is not matter but energy.

The distinction thus drawn, on the analogy of the human organism (the anthropo-analogical thinking is still in vogue, as in the Upanishads), is described as due to the difference between God's "higher" and "lower" natures. "Earth, water, fire, ether, mind, will and self-consciousness: thus is divided My material nature, eightfold. This is (My) lower (nature). But know my other nature, higher than that. It is the Soul by which this world is sustained."[1]

If this "higher" and "lower" nature, of which Krishna speaks in the Gītā, be the same as the "sat" and the "a-sat" of the later Vedic hymns, the "lower" and the "higher" Brahman of the earlier Upanishads, the Being and the Becoming, the static Absolute of mystic apprehension and the dynamic "relative" God of religious relationship, then the Purusha and the Prakṛiti dualism of the Gītā melts, in the final analysis, into a monism, an advaitism, a non-duality in the "knowledge" (vidyā) that Brahman alone is the abiding element in the universe.

Man gets confused about this saving "knowledge". "Deluded by these conditions of existence, that consist of the three qualities (*guṇas* of the material nature), this whole world fails to know Me, who am superior to them and eternal. For this is My divine illusion (Māyā), consisting of the three qualities, hard to overcome. Those who devote themselves to Me escape this illusion", says Krishṇa.[2]

The term māyā is here used. And it may even be interpreted in the sense it later acquires in the classical Vedānta. But the simple meaning of "delusion" or "appearance due to the exercise of some magical potency" quite fully satisfies the purpose in this context. Moreover, if the *causa efficiens* in the bringing into being of this "divine illusion" be the eternal Brahman, it is definitely explained that the *causa materialis* is the primordial Prakṛiti "consisting of the three guṇa". And Prakṛiti is not only different from Purusha, and said to exist eternally parallel with it, but most certainly has existence in its own right. The "divine illusion"

[1] *Bhagavad Gīta*, VII, 4, 5.

[2] *Ibid*,, VII, 7, 13, 14.

is, then, not metaphysically unreal: its "unreality" is only for the religious consciousness.

Besides, nowhere in the epics is this Māyā equated with Prakṛiti as such. It is not cosmic: it does not include all material nature. It is definitely brought out only with reference to the "divine". We know that in epic religious philosophy, evil is recognized and God is *not* made responsible for it. The innate activity of Prakṛiti energy, with its twenty-four components already described, is accountable for evil.

Furthermore, Hindu thought is not yet concerned with the universe, the *jagat*. Religious relationship, existing as it does between the Ātman and the individual ego (jīva), is more concerned with these two entities than with the world as including all organic and inorganic matter. In Hindu religious thinking up to this period the world is considered wholly in terms of the individual souls (jīva) living in it.

5

IS THE EPIC WORLD REAL?

So far as the positive truth of the negative formula of māyā is concerned, we must conclude that in the epic philosophy the *sole* reality of the Brahman is *not* maintained consistently. But we find the Gītā, consciously or unconsciously, reconciling a universe that is dualistic with an ultimate world-ground which, in the final analysis, is One, or "attaining to a Oneness".[1]

But does the Gītā hold that this world of change is unreal? There is no indication that the changes of the world are by any means imaginary.[2] On the contrary, Prof. Radhakrishnan points out that the Gītā repudiates the view that "world is untrue, without any fixed basis, devoid of any ruler".[3] "Prakṛiti", says Radhakrishan, "is a general feature of the world. The interminable antagonisms, the mutual devourings of the various forms of existence, the evolving, the differentiating, the organizing and the vivifying of matter are all due to Prakṛiti."[4]

It is, however, implied that the world of experience, in which there is for ever a struggle of opposites, obscures the vision of the real Brahman (which is above all opposites)[5] from the view of the mortal individual, *jīva*. The world is thus deceptive in

[1] *Bhagavad Gītā*, VI, 30, 31.
[2] *Ibid.*, III, 28, IV, 6, VII, 14, XIV, 23.
[3] *Ibid.*, XVI, 8.
[4] Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Macmillan, 1922, vol. i, p. 548.
[5] *Bhagavad Gītā*, II, 45, VII, 28.

character.[1] But it is *not* an illusion by any means. The world is a source of delusion; it misleads men into thinking that the ultimate is the changing world of actions with its resultant emotional reactions. It effectively blinds men from perceiving the Absolute Reality which, in static perfection, is unperturbed by all the pleasure-pain seeking events of sense experience.

In the sense of a confusion of values, there is, of course, *avidyā*, ignorance which is caused by the "divine *māyā*". Such beclouding of the human intellect is due, in the first instance, to man's ego-centric predicament, the handicap of the *ahaṁkāra* (which is a creation of Prakṛitic energy). But the delusion is further aggravated by the Divine māyā of God himself. Man, therefore, finds it doubly difficult to get behind the struggle of opposites, the process of becoming, to the real, "above all opposites", the Static Perfection of the Being.

Still, paradoxically enough, the divine māyā links the world of change with the unchanging Absolute. It is the mysterious power that connects, as it were, the seen and the unseen; and, in the final analysis, it is really responsible, as Īśvara's creative *śakti*, for the world of Becoming. In a previous section we showed how Dravidian influence makes this aspect of Īśvara his feminine counterpart; and how the authority of the scriptures is invoked to support this theology. Śāktism as a cult is first evident in the epic period, and the idea of māyā very definitely goes into its making.

In what sense, then, can we say that the doctrine of Māyā is present in the epic thought of the heroic age in India? Most certainly not in the sense of rigorously maintaining the *sole* reality of the Brahman–Ātman, and, in deference to that great truth, denying the world of sense-perception all metaphysical validity. Māyā is here neither cosmic illusion nor cosmic ignorance or *avidyā* as in the later Vedantic sense.

The world is real in epic thought; so Brahman is real. But epic thought is not consistent about the nature of this Brahman: for, sometimes Brahman is personal; sometimes it is impersonal; sometimes both. This is explained away as due to the mental make-up of the devotee, and his innate incapacity for understanding the nature of Reality. At any rate the finality and supremacy of the Brahman (however perceived) is set over against the world of change.

It is not the reality or unreality of the world as against the ultimate reality of the Brahman that concerns the epic thinker of the Gītā. He is rather concerned with the death-producing confusion of *religious* values which is caused by Māyā. Māyā

[1] *Bhagavad Gītā*, VII, 14, VII, 25.

produces a bewildering partial consciousness which fails to experience all of reality in any situation. That is why the Gītā advocates a negative attitude towards life—negative in the sense of being utterly passive to all actions and the emotional reactions they produce in the individual. One should get *beyond* love and hatred, pleasure and pain, success and failure, all such pairs of opposites; not because they are phantom-creations of the imagination; on the contrary, they are, indeed, real. But from the standpoint of the quest for religious liberation they are a positive hindrance. Still they are due to God. That is the mystery, which is aptly termed "divine *māyā*".

CHAPTER IV

MĀYĀ IN THE BRAHMA SUTRA AND GAUḌAPĀDA'S KĀRIKĀ

I

THE NATURE OF THE SŪTRA LITERATURE

Exactly when religious speculation in India branched out to form accepted schools of thought (*Darśanas*, literally "points of view"), characterized by distinctive theories concerning the nature of Reality, of man and the world, it is difficult to say. We had occasion to notice such differences of interpretation even in the Upanishads; as, for instance, about the nature of the Brahman and Ātman. The tendency to emphasize these different interpretations develops in the period of the Epics. In dealing with the Epic speculation of the Gītā we found ourselves using terms which became current only in the later darśanas of the classical period. The Sāṁkhyan distinction between *Purusha* and *Prakṛiti*, the Yoga deism and the Vedānta advaitism, were indeed recognized in the Epics, but not as full-fledged doctrinal affirmations.

During the Epic period, the six classical systems of Indian thought,[1] not to mention other heterodox schools,[2] were gathering form and gaining precision as more or less schematic philosophic creeds. About this time there grew up that type of Hindu literature which came to be known as Sūtras, or compendiums, which were supposed to summarize briefly the teachings of each school of philosophy. Das Gupta[3] compares the Sūtras to lecture notes jotted down by pupils while the great gurus instructed them on the doctrines of the various schools. These "lecture notes" are so very terse and laconic that by themselves they convey no meaning to the reader. The barest minimum of words was used, with little regard for sentence structure. Max Müller quotes Paṭañjali, the author of the Mahābhāshya (a treatise on Grammar), as being credited with the witty remark that the Sūtra writers rejoiced more over the shortening of a syllable or the lopping of a single word in composing their work than over the birth of a son![4]

It is also possible that these Sūtras were originally made the basis of instruction imparted by the gurus to their chelas (pupils).

[1] The Pūrva Mīmāṁsā, the Uttara Mīmāṁsā (Vedānta), Sāṁkhya, Yoga, Vaiśeshika and Nyāyā.

[2] The Lokāyata (Materialists) and Buddhist and Jain heterodox systems. Cf. Schermerhorn on the Lokāyatas, *J.O.A.S.*, l, pp. 132 ff.

[3] Das Gupta, *Indian Philosophy*, i, 63.

[4] M. Müller, *The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, p. 64.

From being "lecture notes" they became rather a syllabus. And some of the gurus set out to write commentaries or bhāshyas on these Sūtras, to clarify and expound the implications of their own schools of philosophy, and in order to defend the position of their particular system against the attacks of others. But since the Sūtras themselves were not exactly perspicuous, the interpretations put upon them grew along divergent lines. And the need arose for bhāshyas on the bhāshyas; and the contribution of each successive commentator served to make each school more of a completed system.

The Sūtras are the "beginnings" of later Indian scholasticism. Their value consists in that they present, in brief summary, all the findings recorded in the early philosophic essays of Indian thinkers extending over many generations. And they provide sources of inspiration to an increasing number of commentators and critics, almost down to the present times. The Sūtras, of any particular *Darśana,* point, on the one hand, to the germs of thought which contributed to its making, and, on the other, to the ideological elaboration since effected by later generations of schoolmen.

The Brahma Sūtras, as the Sūtras of the Vedānta system are called, are no exception to this rule. They have for their primary object bringing together in concise summary the teachings of the Upanishads about the sole reality of the Brahman–Ātman. The knowledge (*vidyā*) of this great truth was particularly helpful in effecting one's salvation. And, since this Vedānta-view of this saving-knowledge is alone considered to be valid, in the Brahma Sūtra an effort is also made to defend this viewpoint from the attacks of rival systems by indicating the fallacies involved in the other *darśanas* (viewpoints).

Deussen claims that the Sūtra stands "to the Upanishads in the same relation as the Christian dogmatics to the New Testament; it investigates their teachings about God, the world, the soul in its conditions of wandering and deliverance, removes apparent contradictions of the doctrines, binds them systematically together, and is especially concerned to defend them against the attacks of opponents".[1]

[1] P. Deussen, *The System of the Vedanta,* p. 21. Carpenter suggests another comparison: "The Sutras have a distinct resemblance to the books of 'Sentences' which served as the foundation of theological teachings in the medieval schools of Europe. They were based on Scripture and the Fathers, and ran a parallel course in time with Indian production, leading off with those of Isidore of Seville (560–636). Most famous was the collection of Peter the Lombard, Magister Sententiarum, whose work was completed between 1145 and 1150. . . . Numberless commentaries were devoted to its elucidation, no fewer than 180 being written in England." Carpenter, J. E., *Theism in Medieval India,* p. 299.

But the comparison is apt to be misleading if pushed too far. For one thing, the conciseness of the Sūtras themselves makes it very difficult to ascertain what they really affirm, as we shall later see.

The date of the Brahma Sūtra has been variously fixed by scholars. Admittedly one of the foremost students of the Vedānta, Deussen speaks with some amount of authority when he places the date as late as A.D. 600. He emphasizes strongly the relation between Bādarāyaṇa (the reputed author of the Brahma Sūtras) and Jaimini, the author of the important treatise on the Karma Mīmāṁsā. These two, he claims, repeatedly quote each other by name. This suggests to Deussen the possibility of the Brahma Sūtras being a composite work edited by a certain Vyāsa who was possibly separated from Śaṅkara, the classical commentator of the Sūtras from the Advaita viewpoint, by only some two hundred years. So Deussen puts the date about A.D. 600.[1] Jacobi, arguing on the basis of the Buddhist Māyā-vāda doctrine which is refuted in the Brahma Sūtras (II, 2, 18–32), concludes that, since it is only the Sūnyavāda doctrine (and not the Vijñānavāda) that is denounced by the Sūtra writer, the work "must have been composed between A.D. 200 and 500".[2]

Professor Das Gupta, on the other hand, pushes the date back to the second century B.C. "The reference in the Bhagavad Gītā to the Brahma Sūtra clearly points", he says, "to a date prior to that of Nāgārjuna; though we may be slow to believe such an early date as has been assigned to the Bhagavad Gītā by Telang, yet I suppose that its (the Sūtra's) date could safely be placed so far back as the first half of the first century B.C., or the last part of the second century B.C."[3] Max Müller[4] points out that the quotations from the Gītā may well be from other sources, and holds as his general opinion that Bādarāyaṇa is not dependent on any authorities that can be assigned to a period later than the Christian era.[5] There is no doubt that a considerable period had elapsed between the date of the early Upanishads and the composition of the Sūtras. Thibaut remarks that the "collection of Sūtras was preceded by a long series of preparatory literary efforts of which they merely represent the highly condensed outcome".[6] Farquhar hazards the conjecture that a compendium of this literature was in existence about the beginning of our era and that this was the precursor of the Sūtras as we now have them.[7] He holds that the reference in the Gītā

[1] Deussen, *S.V.*, pp. 21 ff.
[2] Jacobi, *J.A.O.S.*, 1910, xxxi, pp. 13 ff.
[3] Das Gupta, i, p. 421.
[4] M. Müller, *The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, p. 111.
[5] *Ibid.*
[6] Thibaut, *S.B.E.*, xxxiv, p. xii.
[7] Farquhar, *Outlines of Religious Literature*, p. 126.

is to this earlier sūtra and not to the one which is the classical text on which Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja wrote their bhāshyas. On the whole, evidence points to a date certainly not earlier than the Christian era. The Brahma Sūtras are a comparatively late production.

Although traditionally the writer of the Sūtra (the Sūtra Kāra) is Bādarāyaṇa, considerable doubt has been raised about his being wholly responsible for the entire treatise. Dr. Belvalkar, in an interesting article in the *Indian Philosophical Review*,[1] discusses at length the question of the possible multiple authorship of the Brahma Sūtras. Reference has already been made to Dr. Deussen's view on the subject. But to us that problem is not so pressing. What we are concerned with is to find if the Sūtras teach the doctrine of Māyā; if so, what is the significance they attach to the doctrine.

2

THE SŪTRA TEACHING ABOUT MĀYĀ

It is an open question whether the Vedānta Sūtras teach a rigorous monism. This is to be expected, because the Sūtras themselves a [illegible] ased on Upanishadic thought; and, as we [illegible] thought was itself markedly inconsistent. Although there is a pronounced singularistic view evident in all the Upanishads, it still remains plastic: in the heat of later controversy it was possible to mould the Upanishadic singularism into either an unflinching monism, a religious theism, or even a decided dualism, as suited the occasion.

The Vedānta Sūtras are divided into four chapters or Adhyāyas; each of which is, in turn, divided into four sections (pādās, literally feet).[2] Each pādā, again, is subdivided into adhikāraṇas. And thus altogether we have 555 sūtras or verses (aphorisms). The first Adhyāya deals with the nature of the Brahman, its relation to the world and to individual souls. The second is devoted to a refutation of rival theories propounded by other darśanas. The third discusses in brief the special discipline, the sādhana of Vedānta, or Brahma Vidyā. The fourth chapter deals with the *phala*, the benefits derived by the practice of the Brahma Vidyā.[3]

Perhaps no modern scholar has studied the Brahma Sūtra with

[1] Belvalkar, *Indian Philosophical Review*, October 1918.

[2] Cf. Deussen, *System of the Vedānta*, p. 39, where he points out the mystic significance of the numbers.

[3] For a detailed analysis of the contents of the Sūtras, see Deussen's *System of the Vedānta*, pp. 39–46, and Thibaut, *S.B.E.*, xxxiv, pp. xxxii–xxxv.

more care and thoroughness than Dr. Thibaut. To him we are indebted for three bulky volumes in the Sacred Books of the East Series, in which he has set forth his excellent translation of the two classical Bhāshyas on the Brahma Sūtras—Śaṅkara's, from the standpoint of monistic advaita, and Rāmānuja's, from the standpoint of theistic viśishṭādvaita, monism with a difference. In his scholarly introduction to the Śaṅkarabhāshya, Dr. Thibaut handles with admirable skill the difficult problem of ascertaining the teachings of the Sūtras without reference to the commentaries, and unprejudiced by the sectarian influence of Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja.

Summing up his findings, he states: "They (the Sūtras) do not set forth the distinctions of a higher and lower knowledge (*para* and *apara* vidyā) of Brahman; they do not acknowledge the distinction of Brahman and Īśvara in Śaṅkara's sense; they do not, with Śaṅkara, proclaim the absolute identity of the individual and the highest self."[1] In other words, Brahman, in the Sūtras, is not an undifferentiated, objectless Absolute which is beyond the empirical; to be distinguished from the personal plane of sense-experience; the lower view being confined to those who are unenlightened by the doctrine of ultimate one-ness. Śaṅkara, as we shall see, makes this distinction in order to give some sort of validity to the world of experience, and to console the naïve religious consciousness of those on this lower plane. As a matter of fact, Thibaut finds that "the greater part of the work (the Brahma Sūtras) is taken up with matters which, according to Śaṅkara's terminology, form part of the so-called lower knowledge. . . . We certainly feel ourselves confirmed in our conclusion that what Śaṅkara looked upon as comparatively unimportant formed in Bādarāyaṇa's opinion part of that knowledge higher than which there is none."[2]

The second sūtra of the First Adhāya defines Brahman as "that whence the origination and so on (i.e. the sustentation and reabsorption) of this world proceed". Now, considering that the Sūtras do not distinguish between God and the Absolute (as does Śaṅkara), the definition unmistakably refers to Īśvara as well. "It is as improbable", as Thibaut points out, "that the sūtras should open with a definition of that inferior principle (viz. Īśvara, the personal God), from whose cognition there accrues no permanent benefit (from the standpoint of the Kevalādvaitin), as it is unlikely that they should conclude with a description of the state of those who know the lower Brahman only and thus are debarred from attaining true release."[3]

[1] Thibaut, *S.B.E.*, xxxiv, p. c. [2] *Ibid.*, xxxiv, p. xcii.
[3] *Ibid.*, xxxiv, p. xcii.

Moreover, the latter part of the fourth pāda of the first adhyāya states that Brahman is not only the *causa efficiens* of this world but is also its *causa materialis*.

> And on account of both (i.e. the origin and dissolution of the world) being directly declared (to have Brahman for their material cause).
> (Brahman is the material cause) on account of (the self) making itself; (which is possible) owing to modification.
> And Brahman is called the source . . .
> Hereby all (the doctrines concerning the origin of the world which are opposed to the Vedānta) are explained.
> Brahma Sūtras, I, 4, 25–28.

The word translated "modification" is, in the original, the significant term "pariṇamat". Brahman produces the world by means of a modification of itself: the world is Brahman too. It may be rightly argued that if the Sūtra-writer had believed that the Brahman is the material cause of the world only through Māyā, and that the world was unreal, he would have made a statement to that effect here. But the sūtras do not contain a single word to that effect, either here or anywhere else.

It is also evident that the Sūtrakāra did not believe that the individual soul was absolutely identical with the highest soul, i.e. the Brahman. In Sūtra II, 1, 22, it is stated:

> But the separate (Brahman, i.e. the Brahman separate from the individual souls) is creator; (the existence of which separate Brahman we learn) from the declaration of difference.

Which would mean that the Lord is *adhika*, i.e. additional to, over and above, the individual jīva. Likewise, Sūtra I, 2, 20 would give us to understand that there is a distinction made between the *sārīraka*, the embodied soul, and the *antaryāmin*, the inner controller.

> And the embodied soul (also cannot be understood by the internal ruler), for both also (i.e. both recensions of the Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad) speak of it as different (from the internal ruler).
> Sūtra I, 2, 20.

In fact, the previous sūtra clearly states that the individual soul is *not* the "internal controller". In other words, the individual soul is recognized as an actual entity; real, not illusory.

This brings us to consider the problem of the doctrine of Māyā in the Sūtras. The most important Sūtras relative to this point are found in the first pāda of the second Adhyāya. The sixth Sūtra in that pāda definitely states that the non-intelligent can

certainly spring from an intelligent principle. Several illustrative instances are adduced to prove this point.

> But the separate (Brahman, i.e. the Brahman separate from the individual souls) (is the creator); (the existence of which separate Brahman we learn) from the declaration of difference.
> And because the case is analogous to that of stones, etc. (the objections raised), cannot be established.
> If you object on the ground of the observation of the employment (of instruments); (we say), No; because as milk (transforms itself, so Brahman does).
> And (the case of Brahman is) like that of gods and other beings in ordinary experience.
> Either the consequence of the entire (Brahman undergoing change) has to be accepted, or else a violation of the texts declaring the Brahman to be without parts.
>
> Brahma Sūtras, II, 1, 22–26.

If the Sūtrakāra had believed in the Māyā doctrine it is strange that he should have employed these figures of speech. The illustration of the milk turning into curds (kshīravad dhī) can hardly be likened to Brahman projecting the illusive appearance of this world. And the illustration following, about "the gods and the like" creating (mysteriously enough) real things, certainly reminds one of the Vedic conception of māyā; but it can hardly be taken to imply the māyāvāda of Śaṅkara.

We have yet to consider one significant Sūtra where the word māyā itself actually occurs.

> But it is mere māyā; on account of the true nature (of the soul) not being fully manifested.
>
> Brahma Sūtras, III, 2, 3.

The weight of evidence is very strongly in favour of our concluding that Bādarāyaṇa did not use the term here in the Śaṅkarite sense. The meaning that Rāmānuja gives to the term in this particular passage seems adequate enough to bring out the full context. The word would then mean a wonderful thing, not illusory, however. Such a meaning is in accord with the use of the word māyā in the Vedas, and as late as the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad and the Bhagavad Gītā, both of which we know are in all probability later than the Sūtras.

The Brahman of the Sūtrakāra is not an abstract principle, but the "highest Person"; he is the operative as well as the material cause of the world; he is different from the individual soul though he is its inner controller (antaryāmin); he is not conceived of as Brahman, the absolute on the plane of the transcendental and as Īśvara, the personal God of religion, on

the plane of the empirical. And in the only place where the term Māyā is actually used, it most certainly does not convey the meaning it later acquires in classical Vedānta. Therefore, it is difficult to say that the Brahma Sūtras hold to the doctrine of illusion.

3

THE KĀRIKĀS OF GAUḌAPĀDA

In addition to Bādarāyaṇa's Sūtras, the oldest work on Vedānta Philosophy, from the standpoint of absolute monism, is the Kārikās on the Māṇdukya Upanishad by Gauḍapāda. Gauḍapāda is the earliest exponent of Kevalādvaita, and a noteworthy figure in the tradition which Śaṅkara inherited. It is Gauḍapāda who for the first time in Vedāntic tradition emphatically maintains that, since there is but one Reality, the Brahman alone, everything else is necessarily illusion.

There is no doubt that Śaṇkara took over this absolute monism from Gauḍapāda, and made it the basis of his own interpretation of the Vedānta. Indeed, Śaṅkara acknowledges in grateful terms his deep indebtedness to his great master. Concluding a commentary that Śaṅkara wrote on Gauḍapāda's Kārikās, he says: "He (Śaṅkara) adores by falling at the feet of that great guru (Gauḍapāda), the adored of his adorers, who, on finding all the people sinking in the ocean made dreadful by the crocodiles of re-birth, out of kindness for all people, by churning the great ocean of the Veda with his great churning rod of wisdom, recovered what lay deep in the heart of the Veda, and is hardly attainable even by the immortal gods."[1]

Gauḍapāda flourished at a time when the influence of idealistic schools of Buddhism was predominant. In the sixth and the seventh centuries of our era, Buddhist scholasticism was at its height. The influence of Aśvaghosha, Nāgārjuna, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu was pronounced even in Brahman circles. We hear of many learned Brahmans having turned Buddhists in consequence. It is not impossible that Gauḍapāda was attempting to effect a compromise between the idealism of Buddhism and the monism of the Upanishads, "to combine in one whole the negative logic of the Mādhyamakas with the positive idealism of the Upanishads".

It is significant, nevertheless, that Gauḍapāda should have selected one of the smallest Upanishads—the Māṇḍūkya—and the Upanishad which had much to say about dreams, as the basis

[1] Śaṅkara's *Bhāshya on the Kārikās*, Ānandāśrama edition, p. 214.

for expounding his system of the Vedānta. Thus he makes sure of the sanction of orthodoxy and, at the same time, secures for himself perfect freedom to express his own views.

Gauḍapāda's treatise consists of four distinct sections: the *Āgama*, in which the text of the Māṇḍūkya Upanishad is explained; *Vaitathya* (Unreality), where the phenomenal nature of the world is dealt with; *Advaita* (Monism), which establishes the validity of the monistic theory of reality; *Alātaśānti* (quenching the fire-brand), which deals with the logicality of idealism, thus demonstrating the illusory character of sense-experience.

In the first section, Gauḍapāda enumerates three states of consciousness as sketched in the Māṇḍūkya Upanishad: the *vaiśva nara ātman*, when the experiencer is awake; the *taijasa ātman*, when he is in the dream state; *sushupti*, state of deep sleep, when there is absence of all determinate knowledge. But there is also a fourth state of the self, says Gauḍapāda, which is described as unseen (adriṣṭa), unrelated (avyavaharyam), ungraspable (agrahyam), indefinable (alakshaṇa), unthinkable (acintyam), unspeakable (avyapadesya). In that state the self is alone, the very quintessence of "being" (ekātmapratyāyasāra), all appearances having vanished (prapañcopasama), and in such beatific being, the soul is quiescent (śāntam), good (śivam), nondual (advaita). This last state of the self alone is real; the other states are illusions.

"As in dream, so in waking, the objects seen are unreal."[1] It is only a relative difference in unreality. Life as a whole is a waking dream.[2] To prove the unreality (vaitathyam) of the external objects of our perception, Śaṅkara, commenting on this statement of Guaḍapāda, arranges that particular verse[3] in the form of a syllogism. "Things seen in the waking state are not true: this is the proposition (pratijñā); because they are seen: this is the reason (hetu); just as things seen in a dream are not true, so the property of being seen belongs in like manner (to things seen) in the waking state: this is the application of the reason; therefore things seen in the waking state are also untrue: this is the conclusion (nigamana)."[3] Things seen in a dream differ from those seen in waking in that the former are reduced in size, because they are within (the body of the dreamer). But there is no difference in so far as both are "seen", and are "untrue".[4] Both are illusory creations of the self.

Gauḍapāda goes still further. The subject, or the receiver of these various objective representations, the individual soul, is itself unreal. What is real is the Ātman alone, and that has already

[1] Gauḍapāda, *Kārikās*, II, 4. [2] *Ibid.*, II, 31.
[3] *Ibid.*, II, 4. [4] H. Jacobi, xxxiii, p. 52.

been described as static, absolute perfection, undifferentiated and objectless. Gauḍapāda describes it as all-pervading ākāśa, space. Jīva, the individual soul, is like space enclosed in a jar. When the jar is broken the "individuated" space (ghatākāśa) is lost in the universal space (mahākāśa). So the illusion of the individual soul is dispelled when the accidents of name and form are understood as unreal; it is then merged into the Whole of undifferentiated Being. But for all practical purposes we may treat the individual soul as distinct from the Ātman.[1]

"As the movement of burning charcoal", says Gauḍapāda, "is perceived as straight or curved, so it is the movement of consciousness that appears as the perceiving and the perceived. All the attributes (e.g. straight or curved) are imposed upon the charcoal fire, though in reality it does not possess them; so also all the appearances are imposed upon consciousness (of individuals), though in reality they do not possess them."[2] Birth, death, and all events of life are merely appearances. There are no such things in reality. The acid test of the real nature of anything is its abiding characteristic of persisting for all time in absolute self-existence. So Gauḍapāda argues that what possesses a beginning and has an end, for the reason that it was naught at the beginning and so also at the end, cannot necessarily have any existence. This sense-world and the men who people it are all unreal.

Gauḍapāda also claims that there can be neither cause nor effect. In fact, causation is an impossibility. "Nothing", he writes in the Kārikās, "is produced either by itself or by another, nor is anything in fact produced, whether it be being, or non-being, or either."[3] It is interesting to read Śaṅkara's gloss on this passage. "In fact," comments Śaṅkara, "the being produced by something is impossible to establish in any manner. Nothing is born of itself, i.e. from its own form. Nothing can reproduce itself, as a jar a jar. Nor is anything produced from something else, as cloth from a jar; and another cloth from the first; and nothing can be born of itself and of another for obvious reasons; for a jar and a cloth cannot together produce either the one or the other."[4] All becoming is unreal, valid only in the empirical world. In reality there is no difference at all (nāsti bhedah kataṁcana)[5] between Brahman and Jīvātma, God and the World.

[1] Gauḍapāda's *Kārikās*, III, 3–14.
[2] *Ibid.*, IV, 39 ff. Cf. Das Gupta, I, 428, also Shastri, *Doctrine of Maya*, p. 84. [3] *Ibid.*, IV, 22. [4] *Ibid.*, III, 15; cf. III, 9 and III, 24.
[5] Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Kārikā*, Ānandaśrama series, 1928, No. 10, p. 178.

4

GAUḌAPĀDA'S INTERPRETATION OF THE WORLD AS MĀYĀ

From the very outset of his treatise, Gauḍapāda takes a negative attitude towards the world of sense-experience. By analysing the individual self at its three stages of consciousness, he proves that all experience of externals is fundamentally of the same nature as dreams. He shows that any object, presented to the consciousness, cannot be real. He, therefore, argues that since the make-up of things perceived (even if thought of in terms of causality) is not intelligible, they cannot be real. And finally, he points out that, since they have a beginning and an end, they cannot be real. What, then, is the world? Illusion, Māyā, answers Gauḍapāda.

The word, māyā, which occurs so very rarely in philosophical discussions so far in Indian thought, is "found in no fewer than sixteen passages in his (Guaḍapāda's) Kārikā, and one whole chapter is entitled Vaitathya, or 'unreality' ".[1] In one place he says, "Māyā alone is all this (world of) duality; the real being the non-dual" (māyāmātram idam dvaitam advaitam paramārthataḥ).[2] In another passage he states, "As dream or magic (Māyā) or *fata morgana* is the entire cosmos regarded by those versed in the Vedāntas".[3] Or again, "The Ātman imagines himself by himself through the power of his māyā."[4] Māyā is also said to be the beginningless, cosmic principle which hides reality from the vision of man.[5]

But Gauḍapāda does not systematically develop the idea of the world as an illusion: he does not propound a doctrine of Māyā, as does Śaṅkara. He uses the word with a freedom and latitude of meaning at times signifying magic, at other times the apparent dream-like nature of sense-experience, and also to indicate that any connection at all between the world and the Ultimate cannot be rationally sustained. It is all a mystery (māyā), how this unreal, changing world of sense-experience could rest on the real, changeless Ultimate Principle. A careful study of the Kārikā leaves one with the serious doubt if Gauḍapāda was interested in establishing the sole reality of the Ātman: he seems to be more concerned in proving the unreality of the world. To him, therefore, the term māyā helps establish the illusory, multiplicity of life rather than the sole reality of the

[1] Urquhart, *The Vedānta and Modern Thought*, p. 47.
[2] Guaḍapāda's *Kārikā*, II, 17. [3] *Ibid.*, II, 31.
[4] *Ibid.*, II, 12; cf. III, 10. [5] *Ibid.*, I, 16, "māyāhasti".

Ultimate. It is the negative aspect of the formula of māyā that fascinates the mind of Gauḍapāda.

This is not surprising, because he is a thoroughgoing subjective idealist. In Kārikā IV, 24, a Realist contends that ideas and feelings would not arise if they were not caused by external objects. The opponent, in Kārikā IV, 25–37, shows the unreasonableness of assuming objects existing beside and independent of ideas (prajñāpti citta). This refutation, even Śaṅkara in his commentary concedes, is "the argument of the Buddhists of the Vijñānavādin school, who combat the opinion of the realists (bāhyārthavādin), and the Ācarya (i.e. Gauḍapāda) agrees with him thus far". But Gauḍapāda seems to go further and deny the reality of the individual consciousness itself; he accepts apparently the position of the Buddhist school of Sūnyavādins, and the theory of ultimate void. For the next verse (IV, 28) reads: "Therefore the idea (citta) does not originate, nor does the object of the idea originate; those who pretend to recognize the originating of ideas may as well recognize the trace (of birds) in the air." However, Gauḍapāda does not stop with "the void": the *ākāśa* is equated with the Upanishadic Ātman. Since the whole process of arriving at the ultimate Ātman is through a series of negations, the actual affirmation of the sole reality of the Ātman, as well as the ultimate release into it, is also consequently negativistic. The influence of Buddhist thought is quite evident in Gauḍapāda's method, and in his theory of the world and of salvation. It is only his theory of reality that is Upanishadic. The Vedāntic methodology, as in the Sūtras of Bādarāyaṇa, as in all later apologetic, was to affirm the sole reality of Brahman first and then to establish, in some way, the relative reality of the world in relation to it. Gauḍapāda, following the Buddhist scholiasts, proves the unreality of the world first and then clutches at the sole reality of the Ātman of the Upanishads to save himself from being lost in the void of his making.

But his influence on the later development of Vedānta philosophy is important, for this reason. He had very successfully proved the world of sense-experience to be unreal. But Gauḍapāda, in so doing, had come perilously near denying all validity to the religious quest! He did not emphasize the *nature* of the sole Ultimate Reality, nor suggest any theory of the relation that existed between it and this illusory world of beings and things. Śaṅkara makes up for this deficiency. Śaṅkara makes Brahman the Absolute, undifferentiated, objectless Being. He somehow connects that Absolute with the illusory world. The world is māyā, created by the māyā śakti of Īśvara, the empirical

"counterfeit-presentment" of the Absolute Brahman. The world is made empirically real. The soul of the individual is ultimately identified with Brahman Itself. And salvation, instead of the negative extinction of the fire-brand of Guaḍapāda's picturesque metaphor, becomes a positive absorption into the Absolute which is pure *saccidānanda*, Being, Intelligence and Bliss.

The Hindu Upanishadic bias of Guaḍapāda makes him hesitate to use the term *sūnya* (void); although he uses other Buddhist terms in expounding his philosophy. This is significant. He shrinks from the unpleasing prospect of ending in a meaningless void. Instead he uses the term māyā, which, as we have seen, has had a Hindu religious background. That term occurs even in the Vedānta Sūtras, which was in existence when Gauḍapāda wrote his Kārikā.[1] Gauḍapāda thus laid the foundations for the māyāvāda doctrine which Śaṅkara later elaborated.

The Buddhist Sūnyavāda undoubtedly influenced the birth of the Māyāvāda doctrine of Vedāntism. But it is not a case of wholesale borrowing. Had it been so, the world would have ended in an ultimate sūnya (void), in Vedānta also. On the other hand, the Vedāntin's world as māyā is very definitely connected by māyāśakti with the Ultimate Brahman; to that extent it is real. Still, the world is all māyā: not primarily because it is illusion, but because it is inexplicable (anirvacanīya); it baffles all explanation in terms of human concepts.

Both Jacobi[2] and Sukhtankar[3] claim that the māyāvāda is a Vedantic adaptation of the Sūnyavāda of Buddhist scholasticism. It may be. But we must not forget that both Hindu Monism and Buddhist schools of idealism are ultimately traced to a common fountain-head. "To treat Buddhism as alien and unrelated to Upanishadic thought is persistently to misread India's religious history."[4] From the standpoint of organic development of thought, if we investigate the māyāvāda as a philosophic doctrine, we are forced to regard it certainly as a "growth" and not a "graft", "a development from within". And it is left to Śaṅkara to bring out the implications of the doctrine as a tenet of the system of Advaita Vedānta in all its ramifications.

Even before Śaṅkara, we hear of a few scholars, Bhartṛprapañca, Bhartṛhari and Brahmadatta, of whom we know very little.[5] They are referred to in Yāmuna's *Siddhitraya* (tenth century A.D.) as expounders of the Vedānta. Max Müller places the

[1] Jacobi, *J.A.O.S.*, xxxiii, p. 53, also *J.A.O.S.*, xxxi, pp. 13 ff.
[2] *Ibid.*, xxxiii, p. 54.
[3] V. S. Sukhtankar, *W.Z.K.M.*, xxii, pp. 136–139.
[4] S. Radhakrishnan, *Vedanta*, p. 38.
[5] V. A. Sukhtankar, *W.Z.K.M.*, xxii, p. 137 n. 1.

date of Bhartṛhari as A.D. 650.[1] His treatise, called Vākyapādi, is strongly idealistic in tone and maintains the phenomenality of the world. Bhartṛprapañca is cited by Śaṅkara in the latter's commentary on the Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad (V, 1) as having held to the theory of *dvaitādvaita* or *bhedābheda*, whereby Brahman was explained to be as both "one" and "dual" at the same time.

These two trends of thought Śaṅkara attempts to correlate in his theory of Māyā. Brahman is One. The World is multiple. If the One alone is real there is a basic reality to this world of multiplicity. The ultimate is *not* a void. And since the world is *ultimately* based on the Brahman, it cannot be a void; not in the final analysis. What is it then? Māyā, says Śaṅkara.

[1] Max Müller, *The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, p. 90.

CHAPTER V

THE MĀYĀ VĀDA OF ŚAṄKARA

I

ŚAṄKARA, THE MAN AND HIS WORK

The obvious trend towards a rigorous non-dualism (advaita) implicit in Upanishadic texts had furnished a fruitful field of enquiry for the Hindu religious philosopher. But no serious attempt had yet been made to construct a coherent and self-consistent exposition of absolute monism based on those texts. The Vedānta Sūtras, to be sure, in very clever, if too abstruse, aphorisms, had summarized the teachings of the Scriptures with that end in view. Their object was to show that the core of the Scriptures, the end (anta) of all the Veda, and their teachings, was essentially an *advaitism* (non-dualism). But the Sūtras do not give the impression that such *advaitism* was regarded as altogether absolute: it was more of the nature of a "non-dualism".

The laconic terseness of the Sūtras had made them meaningless to the uninitiated. They had need of Bhāshyas, or commentaries, to explain to the earnest student their "hidden mysteries"; and the very nature of the Sūtras provided ample scope for variety of interpretation. Outstanding among these commentaries is the Bhāshya of Śaṅkara.

The Śaṅkara Bhāshya is not a commentary in the usual sense of the word. "Its primary aim is not to elucidate a text (although it may do this with considerable thoroughness), but rather to construct a philosophy on the basis of the authoritative text selected."[1]

The Śaṅkara Bhāshya is regarded as the most valuable and orthodox exposition of the Sūtras from the standpoint of absolute monism, *Kevalādvaita*. With great ingenuity, remorseless logic, obvious sincerity, profound conviction and deep learning, but not without partisan prejudice and the unfortunate handicap of a "fundamentalist's" unquestioning dependence on scriptural authority, Śaṅkara unfolded the teachings of the Vedānta Sūtras, as he understood them.

The original Sūtras are there. But the Bhāshya stands on its own merits. It develops independently a really remarkable "system" of idealistic philosophy and an unflinching monistic metaphysics, both of which are characteristically Śaṅkara's own.

[1] W. S. Urquhart, *The Vedanta and Modern Thought*, Oxford, 1928, p. 51.

Particularly is this true of his exposition of the doctrine of māyā. Śaṅkara gave the doctrine that wealth of new meaning-content which it henceforth holds in classical Vedānta. With Śaṅkara we enter upon a very significant stage in the history of the doctrine. His importance in our investigation cannot be over-estimated.

The period of Śaṅkara is now more or less definitely established, though there is a division of opinion as to when he died.[1] Bhandarkar, Pathak, Max Müller and Macdonell, among other scholars, are agreed that he was born *circa* A.D. 788 and died about A.D. 820, almost in the prime of manhood.

We have many biographies of him; but the actual facts of his life are little known. "The misguided enthusiasm of later admirers, from whom every great person has reason to pray to be saved",[2] is largely responsible for the miraculous legends about him. So many are they that a factual account of his life and doings is difficult to obtain.

But there is little doubt that he was born in Malabar, of a Nambūdri Brahmin family, in a place called Kāladi. It is also very probable that he was a Śākta by birth.[3] Early in life, he showed prodigious aptitude for abstract thinking, and, assuming the robes of a *sannyāsin*, he renounced the world and travelled extensively in quest of knowledge and salvation. He probably studied under Govinda, who was a disciple of the great Gauḍapāda. Thus, at the very beginning of his career, he came under the spell of the unflinching monistic doctrine of the Kārikās. Being convinced of the validity of the Kevalādvaita, he set forth in quest of converts and to vindicate his cause before other scholars of the day. There is a story to the effect that he challenged Kumārila, the great exponent of the Pūrva Mīmāṁsā. But Kumārila was then on his deathbed and passed the challenge on to his pupil, Mandana Miśra.[4] Śaṅkara is said to have disputed, for days together, with Mandana and his learned consort, and finally won them over to the Advaita.

Śaṅkara was not only an inveterate debater; he was a prolific writer as well. Many Vedantic treatises are attributed to him. His commentaries on the principal Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gītā and the Vedānta Sūtras, as well as two philosophic treatises called the *Upadeśasahasri* and *Vivekacūdāmaṇi*, provide us

[1] Bhandarkar's *Report on the Search for S.K.T. MSS.*, 1882, p. 15. Cf. K. B. Pathan, *Indian Antiquary*, 1882, xi, pp. 174 ff., also Sita Nath Datta, *Sankaracharya*, Calcutta, 1898, pp. 63–72. A note by H. H. Wilson: "Venkatesvara (*J.R.A.S.*, 1916) would have him in A.D. 805–897, as he does not believe that Śaṅkara died early."

[2] C. N. Krishnaswami Aiyer, *Life and Times of Śaṅkara*.

[3] Radhakrishnan, *The Vedanta*, Allen & Unwin, 1928, p. 14.

[4] Hiriyanna, *J.R.A.S.*, April 1923; *ibid.*, January 1924.

with the source material for his teachings. His other works are devotional manuals, in the form of popular hymns, addressed to various deities. These hymns, *Dakshiṇāmūrthi Stotra, Harimide Stotra, Ānanda laharī,* and *Saundaryalaharī,* would give us to understand that Śaṅkara was also deeply religious—from the vyavahārika (empirical) standpoint, as he would put it.

There is a touching story of Śaṅkara comforting his dying mother. When his scholarly words weighted with wisdom of the Advaita failed to console her, he sang the hymns of devotion to Śiva that his mother loved. And when she died, in open defiance of his monastic vows, he cremated the remains himself.

Śaṅkara was also a gifted religious organizer. Tradition has it that he established several *Mutts*, monastic institutions, for the study of the Scriptures; all of them to this day claim Śaṅkara as their founder. After a brief, but strenuous, life of varied activity, he died at Kedarnath, in the Himalayas, at the early age of 32. Scholars agree in fixing the date of his death in A.D. 820, though there is a strong tradition that it occurred thirty years later.

"The life of Śaṅkara", says Professor Radhakrishnan, "makes a strong impression of contraries. He is a philosopher and a poet, a savant and a saint, a mystic and a religious reformer. Such diverse gifts did he possess that different images present themselves, if we try to recall his personality. One sees him in youth, on fire with intellectual ambition, a stiff and intrepid debater; another regards him as a shrewd political genius, attempting to impress upon the people a sense of unity; for a third, he is a calm philosopher engaged in the single effort to expose the contradictions of life and thought with an unmatched incisiveness; for a fourth he is the mystic who declares that we are all greater than we know."[1] Such, indeed, was the versatile genius of Śaṅkara.

2

THE PERIOD OF ŚAṄKARA

Śaṅkara lived in an age of religious ferment in Indian thought. It was inevitable, therefore, that his philosophic speculations, as those of others before him in India, should be largely directed by the decidedly religious urge of the times. Philosophy in India had been at no time an intellectual pursuit *per se*; she was always the hand-maid of religion. The end and aim of all knowledge was to make deliverance (mukti) possible. Śaṅkara's re-statement of the more acceptable way of release from the *saṁsāra* of

[1] S. Radhakrishnan, *The Vedanta*, p. 16.

repeated lives, therefore, was but one of other solutions current in the field.

Buddhism, it is true, had already begun to decline, but it had left behind heavy traces of its idealism. Buddhism had refused to recognize Ultimate Reality as other than a mere causal nexus, so it had not appealed to the Indian mind; but its interpretation of the world of change had gained acceptance among many orthodox Hindu thinkers. The two important schools of Buddhist thought at this time were the *Sūnyavāda* and the *Vijñānavāda.* As early as A.D. 200 with the rise of *Mahāyāna* literature there emerged the doctrine of the "non-essentialness and voidness of all dhammas", of feeling (vedana), concepts (saṁjñā), conformations (saṁskāras), etc. To know and regard everything as pure nothingness was the part of true wisdom (prajñāparāmita). This doctrine had developed along two lines; the Sūnyavāda or philosophic nihilism, and Vijñānavāda or pure idealism. The Sūnyavāda maintains that all our ideas, if analysed, contain logical impossibilities or self-contradictions, and that, therefore, nothing real can underlie them. Moreover, that upon which our ideas are based is a "void" (sūnya, nirūpakhya). This system was founded by Nāgārjuna who lived about the end of the second century of our era.[1] The Vijñānavādins tried to elucidate the phenomena of consciousness of externality as eventually traceable to "beginningless illusory ideas" or instincts of the mind (vasana). They contend that consciousness (vijñāna) alone was real. This school was established by Asaṅga and his younger brother Vasubandhu who is reputed to have flourished during the latter part of the fifth century A.D.[2] Śaṅkara was impressed by this Buddhist theory of appearance, but he felt that we should not stop with proving the unsatisfactoriness of phenomena; we ought to go further and get to know the nature of the permanent background embodying all values in the universe.

Jainism, unlike its contemporary, was far from being decadent at this time. In fact, it was at the zenith of its influence. The Jains did not admit the authority of the Vedas, but placed a great deal of value on common-sense experience. All things, they held, could be divided into two groups—living *jīva* and material *ajīva.* As pluralistic realists, they believed in an infinite number of souls, substantial and eternal, which "in reality occupy innumerable space-points in our mundane world (lokāksha), have

[1] His date is established by a poem of Āryadeva, a contemporary; internal evidence in the poem (edited in *J.S.A.B.*, 1898) points to early third century A.D.

[2] Takakusu, *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extreme Orient*, 1904, iv, pp. 53 ff.

limited size (madhyama-parimāṇa) and are neither all-pervasive (vibhu) nor atomic (aṇu).[1] Ajīva or Pudgala is matter consisting of atoms, which are without size; it is eternal. All material things are, in the ultimate analysis, due to the combination of atoms. What is (sat) is neither that which is static and absolutely unchangeable nor the phenomena which are constantly being formed and re-formed in this dynamic world of Karma and Saṁsāra. The Jain conception of being is a compound of dhruva (permanency), utpada (addition of new characteristics) and vyava (the loss of some old qualities) all in terms of the commonsense experience of a critical realism, fundamentally pluralistic. In regard to the Jains, Śaṅkara feels the need to vindicate the authority of the Scriptures that they denied. That is why, he held, the Jains slipped into the fallacy of believing in a pluralistic world which they conceived of in terms of everyday experience.

Reference has already been made to Śaṅkara's encounter with one of the greatest living exponents of the Mīmāṁsikās of his day. Extreme religious asceticism had given place to abstract speculations, as in the case of the Buddhists; even where the Upanishadic Brahmanites like Gauḍapāda and Govinda were concerned. Neither asceticism nor speculation appealed to the religious man of the day; much less did they satisfy his religious needs. The tendency was, therefore, to return to the ritualistic devotionalism of the Vedic days, and the Karma Mīmāṁsikā attempted to show that salvation was through elaborate ritualism. According to Kumārila, the teacher of Mandana Miśra, salvation was the effective neutralization of evil deeds by good (sacrificial) deeds, so that re-birth was made impossible. "To Mīmāṁsā, therefore, there is no God, no creator, no creation, no dissolution or pra-ḷaya."[2] Individual souls, eternal, omnipresent and many, in association with matter, according to the automatic working of Karma, kept this world going. Śaṅkara felt keenly that this "Mīmāṁsikā emphasis on Karma developed ritualism devoid of spirit".[3]

At this period, the Pallava dynasty was in power in South India.[4] The earliest of these rulers had been Buddhists, but later successors were some Vishṇuites, and some Śaivites. Under their regime, peace and prosperity were restored by the central government. Religion flourished; religious festivals and temple worship, inspired by Puranic Hinduism, spread. Śaivite saints (Aḍiyārs) and Vishṇuite devotees (Āḷvārs) were already making their

[1] Das Gupta, *Indian Philosophy*, Cambridge, 1922, vol. i, p. 189.
[2] *Ibid.*, i, p. 403. [3] Radhakrishnan, *The Vedanta*, p. 15.
[4] V. A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, Oxford, 1920, pp. 207–210.

gospel of Bhakti-devotion popular and powerful. Popular cults were given the sanction of orthodoxy, and local deities were included in the Hindu pantheon. Brahmanism was being transformed into the Hinduism of later days.

When Śaṅkara assumed the role of a religious reformer and systematic philosopher, he had to take into account all these contemporary factors. He attacks with violent polemic other viewpoints (darśana), and with equal vigour defends his own theory. All the time he is also himself assimilating and re-interpreting many of the religious and philosophic tenets which prevailed in his day. His system is intended to meet the needs of the head and the heart, of the metaphysician and the man on the street.

This comprehensive outlook which takes in every possible difference in religious needs and demands, conditioned by the social and cultural background of the heterogeneous population of a vast country, is a peculiar characteristic of Hindu "tolerance". To the student of the history of religion this tendency presents no little difficulty. Hinduism, at any period in its history, is a glorious confusion of religious notions and philosophic concepts couched in terms which are used interchangeably by different schools and sects. In each case the exact connotation is only to be gained by study of the context; and the context is variously explained by commentators, though all of them claim the sanction of the Scriptures.

Śaṅkara was no exception. He too is handicapped by the prevailing tendency which accorded ultimate validity not to reason but to the Scriptures. So much so that Prof. Das Gupta is inclined to believe that all that Śaṅkara cared for was to "show that his interpretation was the only interpretation that was faithful to the Upanishads, and that its apparent contradictions with experience could in some way be explained. . . . He was not writing a philosophy in the modern sense of the term, but giving us the whole truth as taught and revealed in the Upanishads and not simply as a system spun by a clever thinker, which may erroneously appear to be quite reasonable."[1]

Śaṅkara, himself, repeatedly draws our attention in his Bhāshya to his dependence on the authority and validity of the Scriptures. "As the thoughts of men", he argues, "are altogether unfettered, reasoning which disregards the holy texts, and rests on individual opinion only has no proper foundation."[2] And, again, "On account of the diversity of men's opinions, it is impossible to accept mere reasoning as having a sure foundation."[3] So, he argues, "the fact

[1] Das Gupta, *Indian Philosophy*, i, p. 434.
[2] *Śaṅkarabhāshya*, *S.B.E.*, xxxiv, p. 314. [3] *S.B.E.*, xliv, p. 315.

of everything having its self in Brahman (for instance) cannot be grasped without the aid of the scriptural passage, 'That art Thou' ".[1]

Bondage to the letter of the Scriptures and to the authority of Revelation is not easily reconciled with the spirit of investigation that should be characteristic of true philosophy. If Śaṅkara appeals to the final court of the Upanishads and shuts up his opponent, his followers similarly appeal to Śaṅkara, in turn, and effectively prevent further unprejudiced inquiry. It comes about, eventually, that Śaṅkara, to the Advaitin at any rate, is looked upon as the final authority on the Vedānta.

Even so enthusiastic an admirer as Deussen is forced to admit that Śaṅkara's close adherence to the authority of the Upanishads and the textual sequence of the Sūtras greatly hampers the internal consistency of his own exposition. It mars the coherence and completeness that the system otherwise would have had.[2] And, not often, Śaṅkara himself realizes that adhering closely to the Upanishadic texts is irksome, especially when he is aiming at proving his point, viz. that the Upanishads teach but one thing, absolute Monism. So, when he realizes internal disharmony between the texts themselves, he arbitrarily scraps the one or the other of the conflicting passages as he finds convenient. For instance, in discussing the "non-qualitative", as against the "qualitative" Brahman, which is also referred to in the Upanishads, he says: "There being a conflict between the two passages, we . . . decide that the texts referring to Brahman as devoid of qualities are of greater force, because they are later in order than those which speak of Brahman as having qualities. Thus everything is settled."[3]

In [illegible] ıra, therefore, we should bear in mind that [illegible] by his times. He set about his task of interpreting the Vedānta with the characteristic Hindu tolerance which can admit of diverse solutions to the same problem, readily assimilating what in contemporary thought was reconcilable with his advaitism. Śaṅkara was anxious to find some way of including everyone within the pale of Hinduism. He was willing to concede to the popular mind, without giving umbrage to the "elect"; he was no less eager to uphold the authority of the Scriptures, the Śruti and the Smṛiti, as the ultimate source of true religious knowledge, and to refute the "free-thinking" of the dissenting Buddhists and Jains.

[1] *S.B.E.*, xliv, p. 316.
[2] Deussen, *The System of the Vedānta*, Open Court, 1912, p. 220.
[3] Thibaut, *Śaṅkarabhāshya*, *S.B.E.*, xlviii, p. 26.

3

ŚAṄKARA'S UNIVERSE

Śaṅkara's approach to the problem of the riddle of the universe is inspired by his religious conviction of the sole, ultimate reality of the Brahman. In the final analysis, this is an assumption with Śaṅkara for which he finds authority in the Scriptures.[1] This conviction of the sole reality of the Brahman provides the starting-point of Śaṅkara's speculation. Therefore, unlike his guru, Gauḍapāda, he starts with a positive affirmation of what is real and argues from the sole reality of the Brahman to the obvious unreality of all other than it. This is decidedly a more secure procedure than that which Gauḍapāda follows in his Kārikās. Gauḍapāda does just the reverse. He first disproves the reality of what cannot of its nature be real, and finding himself faced with a "void", equates that "void" with the Upanishadic Brahman.

Not so Śaṅkara. Every time he talks about the unreality of the world of sense-experience he is endeavouring to prove the sole reality of the Brahman. His Brahman is an absolute Being, devoid of qualities, the "wholly other". It has no *genus*; it is characterized by no attributes; it does not act; it is related to nothing else. "The highest Self", says Śaṅkara, "is eternally pure, intelligent and free, never changing, one only, not in contact with anything, and devoid of form."[2] It is the negative of everything that is positively cognized. So that it could only be described, in the words of the Scripture, as *Neti, neti* (Not thus, not so). "A conception negative in form . . . the symbol (ideogram) for a content or meaning which, if absolutely unutterable", says a German student of the Vedānta (in another connection),[3] "is none the less in the highest degree positive." To quote another German scholar, "Brahman is the last unknowable origin of the existent."[4] It is not Being which possesses intelligence as an attribute merely; it is itself pure intelligence or self-illuminousness. It is thought without any objects, and it can itself never become an object of consciousness. It is untrammelled and infinite, essentially blissful and peaceful in the sense of being free from all influence of variety and change. This eternal "I", according to Śaṅkara, refuses to become an object. If it enters into knowledge at all, it can only be as it is experienced—the "empirical self". In that case, it ceases to be that which we want to know; we "know" it only as something other than it really is.

[1] *Śaṅkarabhāshya*, *S.B.E.*, xxxiv, p. 355; cf. *ibid.*, pp. 300, 306, 307.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 190. [3] Rudolph Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, p. 189.
[4] Deussen, *System of the Vedanta*, p. 131.

How, then, can this constant Subject be ever known, if at all? Not "known" certainly, answers Śaṅkara; but intuitively realized. For the individual self, the *jīva*, according to the Scriptures, is in essence one with the Brahman.[1] That is the significance of the Upanishadic passage "That art thou".[2] In this connection, Śaṅkara expounds his two orders of "Knowledge", the "higher" (paravidyā) and the "lower" (aparāvidyā). The former mystically, and immediately, apprehends the true nature of reality; not through the categories of the senses, but by a process of abstraction based on a series of negations of common-sense experience and relations of every day generally associated with the world-life. This process is made possible by a technique of devout meditation. By penetrating deeper and deeper inwards, as it were, the seeker would discover that his real Self is the Self of the Universe. The practical motive of release is, of course, the sole urge for acquiring this identity consciousness. "If he sees in the Self, consisting of bliss, even a small difference in the form of non-identification", warns Śaṅkara, "then, he finds no release from the fear of transmigratory existence. But when he, by the cognition of absolute identity, finds absolute rest in the Self, consisting of bliss, then he is freed from the fear of transmigratory existence."[3] More emphatically, in a later passage, he declares, "As, therefore, the individual soul and the highest Self differ in name only, it being a settled matter that perfect knowledge has for its object the absolute oneness of the two; it is senseless to insist (as some do) on a plurality of Selves and to maintain that the individual self is different from the highest Self, and the highest Self from the individual self."[4]

Śaṅkara interprets the Upanishads as teaching the absolute identity of the Ultimate Principle (Brahman) and the ultimate individual ego (the Ātman). This is the "higher" wisdom which leads to final emancipation from the round of re-births. As such, this "higher" wisdom is not only totally distinguished from the "lower" wisdom: the two vidyās are both clearly stated to be mutually exclusive.[5] They are as separate as dreams and waking experience. Just as when we awake we do not trouble to pursue a dream, but forget about it entirely, so when the true knowledge arises, "the world of effects, with the means and objects of right knowledge and its results of action, is untrue."[6] But, at the same time, Śaṅkara takes care to add that "as long as true knowledge does not present itself, there is no reason why the ordinary course

[1] *Śaṅkarabhāshya, S.B.E.*, xxxiv, p. 195.

[2] Cf. *Kaṭha, Up.*, III, 1; *Muṇḍ.*, III, 1, 1; *Śvet.*, IV, 6, 7.

[3] *Śaṅkarabhāshya, S.B.E.*, xxxiv, p. 71

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 282.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 323.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 324.

of secular and religious activity should not hold on undisturbed".[1] This, according to Śaṅkara, is the "lower" wisdom. And, true to the Indian tradition which puts the claims of religion uppermost, he bases the entire distinction between the esoteric, transcendental knowledge of the identity-consciousness with the Ultimate and the esoteric, empirical knowledge which takes the world of multiple relations at face value on the fact that the former leads to release from *saṁsāra* while the latter does not. For this reason alone, it is a mistake to state that the two orders of knowledge of Śaṅkara are the same as the Kantian distinction between the noumenal and the phenomenal. While Kant remains content to be agnostic about the phenomenal, Śaṅkara is openly condemnatory. "It is a pity", Kant would say, "we are handicapped in our intellectual pursuits by the categories of our human circumstances. But that is the most we can achieve." On the other hand, Śaṅkara says, "This is a matter of life and death. Be warned. Your intellectual activities are misleading. They proceed from a wrong principle. To trust them is the worst you can do. They will keep you bound to endless lives and deaths." So we must bear in mind, in studying Śaṅkara, that his is a practical quest for release from this world of rebirths; that his conception of "right" and "wrong" is based upon whether or not any relationship we enter into in life works towards or against that end of *moksha;* and that his ultimate criterion of truth is purely metaphysical, what is of absolute validity, what of its very nature is incapable of verification in the here and now.

But how can we completely ignore this world we find ourselves in? Our everyday relations demand that we recognize their demand on us to act, whether we like it or not. Śaṅkara was not unaware of this demand; he therefore develops his "lower" wisdom for the benefit of those still unenlightened in the "higher", as also for the benefit of the enlightened who cannot cut themselves off from life.

At the very outset, in his Bhāshya, Śaṅkara makes it clear that the world of sense-experience is not ultimately real. The object of knowledge is the external world. It includes intelligent nature, organic bodies with their sense organs, internal organs, and the object of the senses. The subject is the universal Self whose nature is pure intelligence. These two cannot interact. Their respective spheres of action are the notion of the "Thou" (the Non-Ego) and the "I" (the Ego) which are opposed to each other as much as darkness and light and so cannot be identified. Still less can their respective attributes be identified. Hence it follows that it is wrong to superimpose upon the subject—whose

[1] *Śaṅkarabhāshya, S.B.E.*, xxxiv, p. 324.

Self is intelligence, and which has for its sphere the notion of the Ego—the object whose sphere is the notion of the Non-Ego, and the attributes of the object; and, *vice versa*, to superimpose the subject, and the attributes of the subject on the object.[1] In spite of this, Śaṅkara admits that it is so inherently natural (naisārgika) for men to "superimpose upon each the characteristic nature and the attributes of the other, and thus . . . to make use of such expressions as 'That am I', 'That is mine'", etc.[2] "This superimposition", adds Śaṅkara, "thus defined, learned men consider to be Nescience (avidyā), and the ascertainment of the true nature of that which is (the Self) by means of the discrimination of that (which is superimposed on the Self), they call knowledge (vidyā)."[3]

The "lower" wisdom (aparāvidyā), from the standpoint of ultimate validity, is really Nescience, ignorance of the saving "higher" wisdom. Therefore, it is *avidyā*, as against *vidyā*. While men are in this state of *avidyā*, it is natural (naisārgika) to form erroneous empirical concepts by the transference of the subject on the object (and vice versa), and to act under that misapprehension. But since the false transference does not in the slightest degree affect the true nature of things (vastusvarūpam), the world of sense-perceptions in which all these transferences are effected, as well as the individual souls, the jīva, that mistake these erroneous empirical concepts and act on them, are all from the ultimate standpoint māyā, illusory.

Nevertheless, "all empirical action is true", conceded Śaṅkara, "so long as the knowledge of the Self is not reached; just as the action in dreams before waking takes place. As long as the "knowledge" of the unity with the true Self is not reached, one does not have a consciousness of the unreality of the procedure connected with standards and objects of knowledge and fruit of works. But every creature under a designation of "I" and "mine" mistakes mere transformations for the Self and for the characteristics of the Self, and on the other hand leaves out of consideration their original Brahman-selfhood; therefore, before the consciousness of identity with the Brahman, all worldly and Vaidic (ritualistic) actions are justified."[4] So long as sense experience lasts we have empirical consciousness of a phenomenal universe. But such a universe possesses no ultimate metaphysical validity, because the whole objective order of the external universe (Māyā) resides in the realm of *Avidyā*, Nescience. The transcendent, absolute consciousness, the Brahman, takes no

[1] *Śaṅkarabhāshya, S.B.E.*, xxxiv, p. 3. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 4. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 9.
[4] *Vedanta Sūtras with Śaṅkara's Commentary*, Bibl. Indica., Calcutta, vol. i, p. 488.

account of the dynamic aspect of experience. However noble and elevating as empirical data in the pragmatic external order, nothing in it has any ultimate validity in the transcendental realm of Absolute Being.

How then is the world accounted for? For all practical purposes it is real: but ultimately it is unreal. It is Māyā, an illusion due to *Avidyā*, Nescience. Māyā conceals objectively the ultimate identity of all phenomena; subjectively (from the standpoint of the *jīva*) it is responsible for the individuating of multiple existences. "Belonging to the Self, as it were", says Śaṅkara, "there are name and form, the figments of Nescience, not to be defined either as being (i.e. Brahman), nor as different from it, the germs of the entire expanse of the phenomenal world, called in Śruti and Smṛiti the illusion (Māyā), power (Śakti), or nature (Prakṛiti) of the omniscient Lord (Īśvara). . . . He (the Īśvara) stands in the realm of the phenomenal in the relation of a ruler to the so-called jīvas (individual selves) which indeed are one with his own self, but are limited by aggregates of instruments of action (i.e. bodies) produced from name and form, the presentations of Nescience. Hence the Lord's being a Lord (Īśvara), his omniscience, his omnipotence, etc., all depend on the limitations due to the adjuncts whose Self is Nescience; while in reality none of these qualities belong to the Self whose true nature is cleared, by right knowledge, from all adjuncts whatever."[1] In other words, the entire world of illusion, Māyā, is substantially Īśvara (the "Highest Lord") in multiple names and forms; Īśvara manifest as various individuals is empirically real but transcendentally unreal. It follows, then, that the Īśvara himself is of the "lower" order of knowledge. In the final analysis, he too is not real!

Śaṅkara could not stop there. He had to connect somehow the world of Māyā with its multiplicity of individual *nāmarūpa* (name and form) and the Ultimate Brahman which alone is. The Brahman is, indeed, the final Self of all these fictitious selves (Jīvas) in our empirical world. Śaṅkara boldly proclaims that the supreme reality of the Brahman itself is the basis of the world.

"By that element of plurality," he says, "which is the creation of Avidyā characterized by name and form, which is evolved as well as non-evolved, which is not to be defined either as existing or non-existing, *Brahman becomes the basis of this entire changing world;* although in its true, real nature it remains unchanged beyond the phenomenal universe."[2] But this ultimate truth of the Brahman being the "basis of this dynamic world of experience" is not realized: not because of the inadequacy of human faculties

[1] *Śaṅkarabhāshya, S.B.E.*, xxxiv, p. 329.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 352. Italics mine.

but "due to the potency of an all-pervading principle of cosmic-ignorance."[1] The Vedāntist philosopher, thus, replaces our subjective ignorance by a cosmical ignorance, and transforms a psychological or epistemological principle int[illegible] one. A disability connected with our human [illegible] transformed into an ability to create a world.

What, then, is this Avidyā? Happel points out that, "the expression *Avidyā*, especially if translated as Nescience, conceals the essence of the conception; for the negative expression leads us in a wrong direction, as if the word signified something negative and indicated merely defect. This is an error. *Avidyā* is a mighty power, for through it arise the upādhis (limiting adjuncts), from which again came the aggregates of names and forms, and the instruments of our activity, and hence also suffering, birth, death, age, sickness, and so on."[2] The whole world of phenomena is due to the power of Avidyā.

Śaṅkara uses the term *Avidyā* and *Māyā* indiscriminately, and it is difficult to see just how he distinguished the two. Not only does he use them interchangeably, he attributes to Avidyā the same functions which he ascribes to Māyā. Thibaut concludes that Śaṅkara identifies them both.[3] Deussen holds that to Śaṅkara Avidyā is the causal principle of the world of appearance while Māyā is the effect, the appearance itself.[4] It is true that later Vedāntin of the school of Śaṅkara make some such distinction; in Śaṅkara's own thinking, however, Māyā is both a principle of creation as well as the creation itself. But it is Māyā as a principle of creation that is obviously identified with Avidyā. Radhakrishnan offers another interpretation. "Avidyā and Māyā", says he, "represent the subjective and the objective sides of the one fundamental fact of experience. It is called avidyā, since it is dissolvable by knowledge; but the objective series is called māyā, since it is coeternal with the supreme personality."

From the standpoint of *Vidyā*, the saving knowledge of "Self"—realization, *a-vidyā*, is a negative concept. It implies the absence of such knowledge, the vidyā. But as noted above, just as Vidyā has the potency of immediately creating, *ex opere operato*, an identity-consciousness in the seeker, which merges him into the static perfection of the sole reality of the absolute Brahman, a-vidyā also has a positive effect, which is equally potent. No less than the creation of the whole world of sense-experience, including God Himself (as distinguished from the Absolute Brahman), is

[1] Frazer, *Indian Thought*, p. 88.
[2] Happel, *Grundanschauung der Inder*, p. 89.
[3] Cf. Śaṅkara's *Commentary on the Sūtras*, i, 45, 3, ii, 1, 6.
[4] *Ibid.*, ii, 1, 4, ii, 1, 28.

due to its potency. This Avidyā is not limited to the individual alone; it is not merely a subjective psychosis. It is inter-subjective, and cosmic. It is Māyā itself. As Urquhart puts it, "in universalizing our ignorance (individual avidyā), we are at the same time objectifying it; we are passing from the view of ignorance as an erroneous mental activity to a consideration of the objects presented by that ignorance to us and to others."[1] However, this transition in Śaṅkara's own writing is not clearly distinguishable.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Śaṅkara uses the term Māyā to signify the objective world of creation, including individual jīvas and material nature (Prakṛiti). The world is characterized by "impurity" and "want of intelligence".[2] "It is impure because, being itself made up of pleasure, pain and dullness, it comprises in itself abodes of various character such as heaven, hell, and so on. It is devoid of intelligence because it is observed to stand to the intelligent principle in the relation of subserviency, being, apparently, the instrument of its own activity."[3]

But, according to the Scripture, the Brahman is the "basis" of the world, as of everything else that is. Indeed, the Scriptures teach the doctrine of the "Brahman as the *cause* of the world." Does it not follow that the effect has to be considered as non-existing before its ac[illegible] No, answers Śaṅkara. That consequence is not [illegible] Vedāntin, for he holds to the doctrine of the effect as already existing in the cause.[4] Therefore, the world is "non-different from Brahman".[5]

Śaṅkara admits that the distinction between subject and object, the enjoyer and the object of enjoyment "may exist as in ordinary experience". "We see, for instance," explains Śaṅkara, "that waves, foam, bubbles, and other modifications of the sea-water, exist, sometimes in the state of mutual separation, sometimes in the state of conjunction, etc. From the fact of their being non-different from the sea-water, it does not follow that they pass over into each other; and, again, though they do not pass over into each other, still they are not different from the highest Brahman."[6]

Commenting on the following sūtra, Śaṅkara adds: "In *reality*, however, that distinction does not exist because there is understood to be non-difference (identity) of cause and effect. (In this sense) the effect is this manifold world consisting of ether and so on; the cause is the highest Brahman."[7] These modifications or effects are *names* only; in reality there exists no such thing as a

[1] Urquhart, *The Vedanta and Modern Thought*, p. 138.
[2] *Śaṅkarabhāshya, S.B.E.*, xxxiv, p. 301.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 301.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 309.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 319.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 319.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 320.

modification. Śaṅkara cites the famous passage in the Chāndogya[1] and by translating the term *vācārambhaṇam* as "having its origin in speech", interprets the text to convey the idea that the modification (vikāra) of the steel, copper, etc., is merely in the name we give to it; as such, the modification is not real: it is real only in so far as it is steel, copper or of whatever metal.

The whole phenomenal world, then, is the appearance of Brahman; and through the power (śakti) of Māyā, Brahman becomes Īśvara (the Supreme Lord) in this phenomenal universe. He assumes an undeveloped, subtle body, forming, "the seed plot for names and forms, and serving as the ground work for the Lord, and yet only as a limitation ascribed to himself".[2] But Īśvara's oneness is not impaired, however, by this self-expression in the many. "As the magician is not affected by the māyā which he has himself created, since it is unreal, so also the Supreme is not affected by the māyā of *saṁsāra*."[3] For Īśvara as the "seed-plot" of all finite existence, the material and the efficient cause of the world, is ultimately an assumption. Beyond this personal Īśvara, who is only relatively real, is Brahman, the Absolute, far-removed from such self-mutilations.

From the transcendental point of view there is no Īśvara who brings this world into being. Only from the phenomenal point of view, in the sense in which the world of appearance and men as individual souls (*jīvas*) are, we can believe in the *Īśvara* as existing, creating and supporting the world of māyā. In reality there is no creation. If Māyā creates, that function is as illusive as its own nature, for the creation lasts only as long as there is *avidyā* (nescience). Nor is Brahman, the highest truth, in any way sullied by its association with Māyā. For the *real* cannot be in any way affected by the *unreal*: the association itself is mere appearance.

Śaṅkara accepts the positiveness of the appearance as a fact in experience that cannot be ignored. The world of becoming is true and real; and as appearance it has, for the time being, a real existence. But the positiveness and definiteness of an "appearance" in spatial or temporal localization are no criteria of truth. Śaṅkara's test of truth is purely metaphysical. Truth or falsity must be determined by a possibility or otherwise of an enduring affirmation and existence. In this sense, the world-appearance (*jagat prapañca*) which is termed Māyā, is *asat*, "that which is not", because it does not *always* exist: the moment one becomes conscious of the oneness (identity, *advaita*), the non-duality behind all this manyness (nānātvam), the phenomenal ceases to

[1] *Chāndogya Upanishad*, vi, 1, 4 ff.

[2] *Śaṅkarabhāshya*, *S.B.E.*, xxxiv, p. 138.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 312.

be. But, since it continues to have pragmatic validity up to the very moment of the dawn of vidyā (the identity–consciousness) it is "that which is", *sat*.

Śaṅkara would seem to analyse existence into three types. There is some such thing as transcendental reality (paramārthika) which is not a matter of cognition but realization. The real (sat) transcends categories of thought-perception. In the second place, there are things empirically real (vyavahārika) which are both *sat* (real) and *asat* (unreal). They have pragmatic value and significance. And, finally, there are "existences" which have no pragmatic reference. When a man mistakes a rope for a snake, the imaginary snake has a fictitious (tucca) validity. But since it contradicts other facts of his experience, the man discovers the invalidity of the *tucca* (imaginary) existence of the snake. The rope itself has empirical reality, but no metaphysical validity. For as soon as the man in question becomes *conscious* of the sole reality of the Absolute Brahman, neither he himself as an individual nor the rope as a fact in his experience exists.

The world as appearance (Māyā) is, then, both true and false, real and unreal. "Belonging to the Self, as it were," says Śaṅkara, "there are names and forms not to be defined as being Brahman, *nor different* from it. These are the germs of the entire expanse of the phenomenal world."[1] Śaṅkara feels that consistent thinking demands that either we must deny creation and the creative manifold or we must accept the creative manifold as the self-expression of the Absolute through inert nature. Śaṅkara adopts the former hypothesis. At the same time he wants to avoid subjective idealism (vijñānavada) and absolute nihilism (sūnya-vāda). He also realizes that some explanation for the relation between Brahman and the world needs to be provided, from the standpoint of ordinary experience.

Śaṅkara, therefore, develops the idea of *māyā* as *śakti* (power). He is naturally thinking in terms of Vedic cosmology. We have already drawn attention in the chapter dealing with Vedic and Upanishadic ideas of the origin of the world to the notion of the *pat* and the *patni*.[2] Brahman splits himself into halves, one male and the other female. Together these two bring forth all that is in the world. Not only is the idea of a *female* counterpart to Brahman emphasized, but also the fact that the static Brahman, without this dynamic creative energy (śakti), is unable to create this manifold, out of himself, and by himself alone. It is accepted that about this time, because of the influence of Dravidian goddess-worship on Brahmanism, Kāḷi-Durga was rapidly gaining increasing recognition as the female counterpart of the Brahman;

[1] *Śaṅkarabhāshya, S.B.E.*, xxxiv, p. 329. [2] Cf. *Brih.*, I, 4, 3.

as Śiva-Śakti she is regarded as being responsible for this world. We also have reason to believe that Śaṅkara himself was a Śākta. He belonged to the sect that worshipped God as creative energy manifested in a goddess. In the Ānanda laharī, Śaṅkara addresses Māyā as the supreme queen (first among many) of the Parabhraman (*tvamai parabrahma māhisi*). She is also called Lakshmi. She says of herself: "That which exists in Brahma as the 'I,' the ancient I-ness, that am I. He who is the inner soul of all beings becoming 'I' is remembered as the Hari. I am, therefore, that ancient I-ness of all beings. . . . God Nārāyaṇa exists and I, Lakshmi, and His highest Idea, and the meaning of 'I' becomes accomplished when it is united with I-ness. That which takes rise from the idea of 'I' is known as I-ness. . . . I do not exist without Him, nor He without me. We both exist together, depending upon each other. Know, therefore, that the relation between me and the Lord is that of substance and quality. Without I-ness, the 'I' deprived of its expression becomes meaningless; and without the idea of the 'I' the I-ness, losing its support becomes meaningless."[1]

Śāṇkara, well-versed as he was in the Tantric theology of times, as a Śākta, assimilates the idea of *śakti* into his philosophy. He traces this śakti to Brahman himself, from the standpoint of the "lower" order of knowledge and makes it the connecting link between the Absolute Brahman and the Personal God (Īśvara). For not only is māyā the divine power (daivī śakti) which projects the phenomenal world of relative reality (speaking from the standpoint of the Absolute) from out of the Brahman itself, but it is also through this power of māyā that the Absolute, the unrelated *nirguṇa* Brahman becomes a *saguṇa* Brahman, the Īśvara, the Supreme Lord. Īśvara, in collaboration with māyā, brings into being this creative manifold. Īśvara is the efficient cause and Māyā the material cause: but never māyā, as a separate entity, alone. This is significant, because Śaṅkara insistently avoids any possibility of giving the impression of the world as altogether *a-sat*, unreal.

Expert debater as he was, Śaṅkara, according to Urquhart, was here probably making use of a dialectic strategy. "Śaṅkara may have felt that not much would be gained by reaching his ultimate position directly. . . . If he could first of all show his sympathy with the ordinary point of view, and then, and only then, proceed to refute it, the victory he would gain would be at once more striking and more secure."[2] This might be. But the fact is Śaṅkara was sedulously avoiding the subjective idealism

[1] *Brahma Vādin*, I, 298.
[2] W. S. Urquhart, *The Vedanta and Modern Thought*, p. 100.

of contemporary Buddhist thought which finally ended in a "void". He himself is a subjective idealist; that he admits himself. But the world of Becoming, which after all is indeed as our minds register it to be, Śaṅkara maintains ultimately rests on Being, the Absolute Brahman. The core of his whole system of thought is the doctrine of the ultimate identity of the Brahman and the Ātman, the Absolute and the quintessence of the individual ego; not the doctrine of the relative reality of the phenomenal.

It is, therefore, difficult to agree with Das Gupta, Poussin, Sukhtankar,[1] etc., that Śaṅkara was unduly influenced by contemporary Buddhistic thought. Śaṅkara's religious realism injects into his māyā-vāda solution of this dynamic world of sense-experience paradoxically—almost illogically—an element of relative reality to the world, which the Buddhist Vijñānavāda does not admit, and the Sūnyavāda openly denies. After passing in review the various schools of Buddhism in his Bhāshya on the Sūtras, Śaṅkara expresses his condemnation of Buddhist theories of the world, in terms severely intolerant. "From whatever point of view," he says, "the Buddhist system is approached, it gives way on all sides, like the walls of a well dug in sandy soil. It has in fact no foundation to rest upon, and hence the attempt to use it as a guide in the practical concerns of life is folly. Moreover, Buddha, by propounding these mutually contradictory systems, teaching respectively the reality of the external world, the reality of ideas only, and general nothingness, has himself made it clear that he was a man given to incoherent assertions, or else that hatred of all beings induced him to propound absurd doctrines, by accepting which they would become thoroughly disregarded by those who have a regard for their own happiness."[2]

In the face of this decided stand he takes against Buddhist idealism and nihilism, it is difficult to be sure if Śaṅkara was after all a thoroughgoing illusionist. Here we approach the very core of our problems. Did Śaṅkara himself give us to understand that the world is an "illusion"? Does such an interpretation of the doctrine Māyā represent the fullness of Śaṅkara's thought?

We have elsewhere pointed out that Śaṅkara is not quite clear in his use of the word māyā. Even his exposition of the Advaita-vedānta, for that matter, is not systematic. He keeps constantly going back and forth from the *Paramārthika* plane (transcendental) to the *vyavahārika* (empirical) plane and vice versa, so that, at times, he does give us the impression that when cornered he escapes through what Carpenter calls the "backdoor of illusion". Deussen, assuming that all true philosophy should negate the universe of

[1] V. A. Sukhtankar, *W.Z.K.M.*, xxii, 137, 138.
[2] *Śaṅkharabhāshya*, *S.B.E.*, xxxiv, p. 428.

sense-perceptions, and carried away by his enthusiasm for Śaṅkara as one such "true" philosopher, proceeds forthwith to interpret Śaṅkara's teachings as definitely leading to a theory of illusion.[1] Prabhu Dutt Shastri falls into the same error. They both forget that if Śaṅkara was an absolute idealist, he was also a religious realist. As Das Gupta points out: "With Śaṅkara the forms of the external world were no doubt illusory, but they all had a permanent background in the Brahman which was the only reality behind all mental and physical phenomenon."[2] Śaṅkara himself in one place states: "whenever we deny something unreal, we do so with reference to something real; the unreal snake, e.g. is negatived with reference to the real rope".[3] When a thing is taken for something else we have an "illusion". Behind the "appearance" is the ultimate reference to reality. Not so with a "hallucination", for instance.

Radhakrishnan, on the other hand, emphasizes the fact that Śaṅkara uses the term Māyā to convey the idea that the ultimate reality as well as the pragmatic validity of the world of experience is inexplicable. It implies according to him a reverential agnosticism about the faculties of life in reference to the higher values of absolute perfection which indeed is the real nature of everything. Meanwhile, Radhakrishnan would have Śaṅkara say: "As for the empirical ramifications which also exist, well, they are there, and there is an end of it. We do not know how and cannot know why. It is all a contradiction and yet is actual."[4] It is true that an element of baffled perplexity is a factor in the composite significance of the word Māyā as used by Śaṅkara. But it is not all of it. For, at times, Śaṅkara does appear as a negative dogmatist who was not content to say simply that we must leave unsolved the problem of the existence of the creative manifold; he did admit that the world is "a matter of words", of name and form; that it *ought* to be an illusion. The entire complex of phenomenal existence is to be considered true only as long as the knowledge of Brahman being the Self of all has not arisen. Śaṅkara is struggling to give adequate expression to his view that one cannot maintain the theory of the *essential* oneness of the world with the Brahman, and at the same time assert that the world ceases to be real at some stage or other.

Another school of thinkers, representative among whom is Kirtikar,[5] contend that Māyā implies a "philosophy of relative

[1] Deussen, *Religion and Philosophy of India*, Edinburgh, 1906, pp. 226 ff.
[2] Das Gupta, *Indian Philosophy*, i, p. 168.
[3] *Śaṅkarabhāshya*, *S.B.E.*, xxxviii, p. 168.
[4] Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, i, p. 35.
[5] Kirtikar, *Studies in Vedanta*, Bombay, 1934.

reality". When Śaṅkara compares the "appearance" of silver and the imaginary snake to the world of māyā, the "reality" in these cases being a conch shell and a rope, he is obviously anxious to affirm that the reality which projects this world of appearance is the Brahman. All facts of experience should be evaluated in terms of this abiding reality of the Brahman; *not* denied as a mere shadow-screen of phantom puppets. In the light of his *metaphysical* criterion of truth and his religious test of validity, Śaṅkara propounds his two orders of knowledge whereby he distinctly bifurcates the metaphysical and the empirical. This involves a relative standard of judgment, one utilized in evaluating the dynamic world of Becoming in relation to the static basis of absolute Being. Therefore, Śaṅkara is not so much negating the world of sense-experience; he is re-interpreting it. What is actual has certainly no independent existence, yet it has existence: it is unreal only if we mistakenly attribute independence to it. The world is *unreal* but not illusory: so Kirtikar interprets Śaṅkara's Māyā-view of the world.

This may be an ideal towards which Śaṅkara was striving, but he has expressed himself so abstrusely that it is by no means easy to say definitely just what his theory of the world was. At any rate, it cannot be denied that both the context in which the word Māyā is used, and the general trend of Śaṅkara's treatment of a "higher" and a "lower" order of "knowledge" give us rather to understand that he accepted the illusory nature of the world of sense-experience. In evaluating Śaṅkara's idea of the world, we must take into account four factors. In the first place, Śaṅkara is a religious reformer; not a systematic theologian. He appeals to the religious instinct of the people and offers them a religious solution of the problem of life. No such solution is tenable unless it takes into account the divine-human communion which is the end of all religious quest. Whatever is purely human has of itself no value; it has value only in so far as it is related to the divine. Śaṅkara's revealed scripture assures him that the ego is identical with the Ultimate Reality. At any rate, the oft-quoted Upanishadic declaration "*tat tvam asi*"(That art thou) and "*aham Brahamam asmi*" (I am Brahman) had established the theory of the identity of the Brahman and the Ātman (the human self). Being a religious realist and an unflinching monist, Śaṅkara finds that the reality of the world, from the religious standpoint, is an illusion. But at the same time, since the world has to be accounted for, he utilizes the popular religious notion of *śakti*, Brahman's śakti, and makes it responsible for the world from the Avidyā standpoint.

He is not only religious in the ordinary sense: he is a mystic. That is why he discounts all human reasoning as possessing any

possible means of "knowing" reality. Reality is not grasped by the categories of human understanding: it is only realized and "felt". This is the *vidyā*, the "magical" precursor of which we had occasion to discuss in our study of the Upanishads. What is other than this *vidyā* is *a-vidyā*: that which helps to "know" the world around us. Since this *a-vidyā* is necessarily limited to sense-perceptions and cannot see through phenomena and grasp the Real, from the religious standpoint, it is just as *valueless* as sheer ignorance; as *deceptive* as the mutilated senses that see and hear where there is nothing to see or hear. In the final analysis, the manner in which these sense categories function and what they perceive is ultimately a mystery (māyā), from the standpoint of the religious realism of Śaṅkara's *vidyā*.

In the third place, we must not forget that Śaṅkara was a product of his times. It is true that much abstract thinking had been achieved in India before the days of this mystic-philosopher. We are here dealing not with primitive intellection but with medieval scholasticism. In interpreting the thought of Śaṅkara, we have to be as much on our guard against reading into his words meanings he did not intend for them, as we were in dealing with the Vedas and the Upanishads. True to the traditions of all scholastic thought, Śaṅkara also is bound by the authority of the scriptures. He cites them as the court of final appeal. He also dogmatically assumes certain propositions because he thinks that the Upanishads emphatically maintain them. The two foremost assumptions of this nature are the *sole* reality of the Brahman and the ultimate identity of the Brahman and the Ātman (the self of the individual). Śaṅkara's whole system of thought is a sincere effort to prove the validity of these assumptions. So his interest in the world of sense-perceptions is derived, secondary and subordinate. And if he sees the logic of negativing the world, it is because that directly follows as a necessary sequence to his scriptural dogmas; he does not reach his conclusion after a critical analysis of the validity of sense-categories, and their adequacy as means towards knowledge of truth and reality.

Finally, Śaṅkara was a syncretist *par excellence*. He generously absorbs contemporary thought and even popular religious *mores*; sometimes without giving due credit to the sources of his inspiration. Thrc [illegible] draws heavily on Buddhist *vijñāna vāda* and [illegible] when he argues against the reality of the world; from his heritage as a Śākta he derives the idea of the "creative energy", of śakti as creatively responsible for the world. Whether this tendency towards syncretism in Śaṅkara's system is conscious and deliberate, we cannot say; but obviously there was in him also that curious paradox of a practical faith

in religion at work here and now as well as the mystic conviction of the *sole* reality of "the objectless, undifferentiated Brahman", a characteristic found in all mystics of all times. If it be true that Śaṅkara established monasteries, and composed hymns of devotion to the gods, if we can depend on the many stories that are told of his life by his own followers, we have to think of him either as a conscious hypocrite, or one who did not find his own teachings practicable. That is, if he had taught that life was an illusion and therefore not to be taken seriously.

On the contrary, he seems to believe that the world is an illusion only to the religious mystic who possesses the "vidyā" of identity-consciousness. Therefore, Śaṅkara says the world is māyā—not sūnya (void) not vijñāna (one-sided). What, then, does he mean by the term māyā? Many things; of which we are able to discern at least six important factors. The world is māyā because it is not to be understood as it is: it is not self-explanatory. From the standpoint of reality it is the one and indivisible, static Brahman. But actually it is a multiplicity of phenomena, constantly changing and dynamic. This "unreal" *appearance* of the real is brought out by the word māyā.

We come to know the world by our sense-categories, and find it empirically satisfactory and real. Even if we have not realized it, we know about the "*vidyā*" state of pure Being, when the world of Becoming is merged and lost in the Absolute. While we are in this state of *a-vidyā* (without that identity-consciousness) we ask how this world of Becoming is related to the Absolute Being. The answer is "Māyā". It is a mystery, incomprehensible, inexplicable while we are in the state of *a-vidyā*.

The scripture definitely states that the Brahman is the "cause" of the world. Śaṅkara explains that the Brahman is the "cause" of the world in the same way as a rope is the "cause" of the serpent it is mistaken to be. The Brahman is no more affected by the world than is the rope by the snake. And the world is as much an "effect" of the Brahman as is the snake an "effect" of the rope. The word māyā is used to convey the idea of the magical, misleading "effect" produced by the Brahman.

Not only is the "effect" Māyā but also the subjective delusion on the part of the onlooker. That is also Māyā. Śaṅkara posits a principle of "illusion" to account for the appearance of Brahman as the world. He does not analyse the human categories of understanding and as a result of scientific investigation comes to this conclusion. He has not attempted either a "critique of pure reason" or an "essay on human understanding". On the authority of the scriptures, partly as a result of a naïve discussion of dream-psychology and partly as a result of the mystic conviction of the

sole reality of the Brahman, he posits a cosmic, subjective conditioning which holds true of man and the world. He assumes the principle of māyā which drops a curtain, as it were, between the world of Becoming in which we live and have our spatial and temporal being, and the Absolute Being.

It is only on this side of the veil the world of experience persists; our dialectic of discursive reasoning prevails; our sense-categories, space-time-and-causality relationships have meaning. We think of ourselves as individuals and conceive of the Supreme Person, the Īśvara. He is the empirical counterpart of the transcendental Brahman. Īśvara creates the world out of Himself through the power of Māyā. This "energy" of Īśvara is called Māyā. Māyā is thus the material as well as the efficient cause of the world. The world is, therefore, Māyā. The energy of Īśvara becomes transformed into the *upādhi*, modifications of unmanifested matter (avyakta prakṛiti). As the outcome of further differentiations based on the final distinction between subject and object, enjoyer and that which is enjoyed, the supreme Subject, Īśvara, with the avyakta prakṛiti as object develops the whole universe of multiple things. In this sense, Śaṅkara makes the māyā a *śakti*-power which creates the world, and which *is* the world.

According to Śaṅkara, then, the doctrine of māyā implies positively that there is but one undifferentiated pure Being which is identical with the *real* world of men. In the ultimate sense, the Absolute is the same as this *phenomenal* world of Becoming. Negatively, Māyā refers to the world as it is. It would then imply that the world is an *appearance* mysteriously caused and sustained by the inexplicable energy of Brahman, the Absolute, which, however, is not in the least affected by it.

CHAPTER VI

THE VIŚISHṬĀDVAITA OF RĀMĀṆUJA

I

THE TIMES THAT MADE THE MAN

We turn now to the religious reaction that characterized the period after Śaṅkara; a movement that was distinctly religious, in that it opposed both philosophic abstractions and sacerdotal formalism. Radhakrishnan speaks for a long line of the thinkers in India when he observes: "Philosophy has its roots in man's practical needs. If a system of thought cannot justify fundamental human instincts and interpret the deeper spirit of religion, it cannot meet with general acceptance. The speculations of philosophers, which do not comfort us in our stress and suffering, are mere intellectual diversion and not serious thinking."[1] Philosophy in India has always been under the "reign of religion". Even as early as the days of Gotama and Mahāvīra a similar reaction against "intellectual diversion" had taken shape in a humanism centred round the concept of a this-worldly *Ahiṁsa*, a non-metaphysical *Dharma* and a quiescent *Nirvaṇa*. But in this period under review, the religious revival materializes in a mysticism, one might say, with primary emphasis on an other-worldly *Bhakti*, a sin-conscious doctrine of *Karma* and the idea of a positive release in *Moksha*.

The movement comes to a head about the eleventh century of our era; but it was by no means a sudden development. Characteristically Indian, it takes a long period of slow growth. Its progress is variously marked by assimilations, identifications, equations and absorptions of many elements, each of which shows a surprising diversity in origin, amounting almost to mutual contradiction.

Even a rapid survey of the most notable of the Bhakti movements, the Vaishṇava sect, brings this claim vividly into relief. Vishṇu is a Vedic deity. In the Vedas he appears as the friend and helper of Indra.[2] From a comparatively subordinate position in the Ṛig Veda, he rises to prominence in the Brāhmaṇas.[3] In the Epic and Purāṇic periods he attains supreme rank, as we noticed in our discussion of the Gītā. About the time Buddhism and Jainism came into being there existed among a group of

[1] S. Radhakrishnan, *The Vedanta*, Allen & Unwin, London, 1928, p. 225.
[2] *Ṛ.V.*, I, 156, etc.
[3] *Śatapatha Brāhmana*, I, 1, 2, 13, III, 6, 3, 3, etc.

people in the north-west of India a form of religion called the *ekāntika dharma*, the religion of devotion to the One. It was professed by a tribe of Kạhatriyas of the name of Sātvata. Megasthenes about the end of the fourth century B.C. makes mention of them.[1] One group of them was called the *Bhāgavatas*, and they worshipped Vāsudeva as the god of gods, the One. Two other groups, though they differed little from the Bhāgavatas, worshipped Nārāyaṇa and Vishṇu respectively instead of Vāsudeva. Just how, we are not able to say, but all these three gods were finally equated and identified as the One without a second, *ekam eva advitīyam*. So that Vāsudeva-Nārāyaṇa-Vishṇu was regarded as the same god, though variously called.

Soon after the Christian era, we have reason to believe that another element was added to this system of *ekāntika dharma*. This was Krishṇa worship. Krishṇa was regarded and worshipped as god by the *Ābhiras*, a tribe of cowherds. By the time we come to the period of the Bhagavad Gītā the ekāntika system was more or less fully developed. The idea of divine descents (avatārs), as well as salvation through loving devotion (bhakti), and the belief in Krishṇa as supreme Lord; all these doctrines were fully established and accepted.[2]

Alongside of this monotheistic development of religious thought, the distinctly monistic metaphysics, which naturally centred round the system of the Vedānta based on the Brahma Sūtras, was also elaborated. The use of formulae like *ekam eva advitīyam*, one only without a second; *sat-cit-ānanda*, pure being, pure thought and pure bliss; *neti, neti*, not this, not that; the very use of the word Brahman interchangeably with the Ultimate Principle by the religious Vishṇuite and the philosophic Vedāntin, both of whom were tied down to the letter of the same Smṛiti and Śruti; all this established an affinity between the Krishṇa-worshipper and the Vedāntin. In time, the Vishṇuite adopts the Vedānta metaphysic and modifies it to suit his needs.

This affinity is brought out more and more fully as the Vishṇuite religion develops a copious sectarian literature. Popular religious conceptions and philosophic formulae of the times are juxtaposed quite recklessly in these Āgamas,[3] many of which were probably lost by the fourteenth century A.D. As an instance, in the Āgamas Vishṇu-Vāsudeva-Krishṇa's original or undivided form is described as *sat-cit-ananda*. Between his eternal form and unchanging nature, beyond the three strands or guṇas already described, yet

[1] Carpenter, *Theism in Medieval India*, p. 200.

[2] R. G. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣnavism, Śaivism*, etc., pp. 35 ff.

[3] They are said to be originally 108 in number. Cf. *Epigrapha Indica*, xi, pp. 80–105.

capable of evolving the world and the actual scene of our existence is *Prakṛiti*. She is conceived of as a woman, with three guṇas (*sattva, rajas* and *tamas*) for her essence. This universe is of her making, and she sustains it by Īśvara's command. Mythologically she is identified with Vishṇu's consort, Lakshmī. Philosophically she is Vāsudeva's śakti, his Māyā, the everlasting cause of all effects, his ahaṅta (egoity), the consciousness in all beings without which individual self-consciousness is impossible. To desire to create is her nature. Of her own free will she manifests the world, and she becomes at once the knower and the known. In all this confusion of religious hopes and philosophic speculations, one clearly sees the intermingling of the Vaishṇava religious faith and the Vedānta philosophy, the popular non-Aryan religion and the Upanishadic orthodoxy of the Aryan effecting a working compromise. The feminine gender of the creative energy of the First Principle is obviously a concession to the non-Aryan religion. Roughly the line of assimilation would run thus: the Dravidian *devatās* or goddesses reduced to one is Brahmanized into Lakshmi from the religious standpoint and Prakṛiti from the standpoint of philosophy. In order to be faithful to the principle of the *ekāntika dharma*, the principle of the One, and to avoid a dualism between Prakṛiti as creative energy and Purusha, the Lakshmi-Prakṛiti composite-concept of religion and philosophy is traced ultimately back into the Vāsudeva-Vishṇu-Krishṇa God, Īśvara, as his Māyā śakti, creative energy, directly responsible for the creation of this world. And the Vāsudeva-Vishṇu-Krishṇa, the Īśvara, is finally made thoroughly orthodox by being identified with the Brahman of the Upanishads. Thus the Vishṇuite satisfactorily meets his religious demands, and at the same time his desire to be classed with the orthodox intellectual.

Another factor also makes its influence felt in this period. In the recorded history of religious development, whenever professional theologians and religious philosophers banked up the shores, building stairs out of sandy dogmas and theoretic abstractions to reach up to the heavens, revelling the while in an obscure transcendentalism, a wise providence stirs up the boisterous waves of our human passions—the raw material of the finer products of art, literature, of religion itself. And with one tremendous force they demolish the skyscrapers. And humanity thumps down to the ground, and nearer Reality. More often than not, in the past, the fit vehicle of such needed reform was found in the poets. This was so in the period with which we are concerned.

Vishṇu piety struck a passionate note in the poetry of the times, protesting vehemently against the uncompromising pantheism that dissolved all human action in cosmic movement,

rendering all sense of the personal impossible. And Tamil, the most developed Dravidian tongue of the non-Aryans, becomes the medium of expression. This is again significant, as indicating the very important part non-Aryan thought plays in shaping the religious history of India, especially in protesting against the vague abstractions of the Brahmanic philosophers. More significant still is the consequence of the protest. For unlike the transition which led to the inception of Buddhism and Jainism centuries ago, the transition effected in this period is characterized by the utterance of confession and the entreaty for divine help, based on a touching sense of personal responsibility, and a more vivid consciousness of individuality.

This we find in the poetry of the *Āḻvārs*—"those who had touched the depths of true wisdom". Of these poets, twelve are recognized as of canonical importance. Unfortunately we are not able to date them. But their age was, in all probability, between the sixth and the tenth centuries of our era.

A cursory estimate of the influence of this school of religious poets may be obtained by a rapid glance over the writings of the last of this sacred line. Nammāḻvār or Śaṭagopan seems to have flourished about A.D. 1000. He is the reputed author of 1,296 pieces of the 4,000, the Nalāyiraprapantham. Only through the writings of his disciple, Nātha Muni (A.D. 985–1030), extracts from whom are extensively quoted by Vedānta Desika (*circa* fourteenth century), do we gain any knowledge at all of his teaching. On the one hand, he was opposed to the legal and ceremonial teachings of the Pūrva Mīmāṁsā, with its doctrine of works and its provision of heavens to match; and, on the other, to the illusion theory of Śaṅkara. He demanded more than intellectual approach to the impersonal Absolute, seeking rather the support and guidance of a living God. To the philosophical justification of that "knowledge" of a Monistic Reality, already worked out by the Vedānta, he felt impelled to add an important modifying element of religious devotion to the God of monotheistic faith, as a practical expression of that "knowledge".

The *Āḻvars* collaborated with the Āchāryas. While the former put forth every effort to cultivate the feeling of love and devotion to Vishṇu or Nārāyaṇa, by composing hymns of great spiritual value, the latter interested themselves in actively participating in disputations and controversies, with a view to establishing their own doctrines and their common creed on an acceptable philosophic basis.[1] The first of this second line of the Āchāryas

[1] There is a remarkable resemblance in the Vaishṇuite religious revival of this time and the famous "Oxford Movement" of later-day English Christianity.

of the movement was Nāthamuni. His grandson, Yāmunāchārya, seriously undertook this task of defending the Vaishṇava theism, and of showing that it had the same purport as the Vedas and the Upanishads. His treatise, entitled *Siddhi-traya*, provides the basis of much of what is called viśishṭādvaita, or qualified monism. The centre of controversy was that the doctrine of religious monism pushed to its logical conclusion would have to admit that all life in this world was due to a principle of illusion (Māyā). Consequently it was unreal. Such a doctrine left no room for the exercise of love and piety (bhakti) in the world. The empirical validity generously given to the world of sense-perception did not bring any real comfort. The doctrine of Māyā laid the axe at the very root of Vaishṇavism.

The great desire of the Āchārya was, therefore, to overthrow the doctrine of Māyā, not arbitrarily, but on the basis of the same Upanishadic sources, claimed to be the mainspring of its support. The doctrine of the world in the Advaita as already pointed out, was derived from its teaching about the nature of Brahman. So to controvert the illusion theory of the world it was necessary to qualify the theory of Reality put forward by the pure monists. Such a working compromise between the monism of Vedānta and the theism of Vaishṇava theology resulted in a "non-dualism with a difference", the Viśishṭādvaita. It was set forth by the great theistic reformer, Rāmānuja, the successor of Yāmunāchārya, in his famous commentary on the Brahma Sūtras.

2

THE MAN AND HIS MESSAGE

Rāmānuja flourished about the middle or latter part of the twelfth century A.D. Sir R. G. Bhandarkar holds that he was born in Śāka 938 corresponding to 1016 or 1017 of the Christian era.[1] Prof. Radhakrishnan places the date at A.D. 1027.[2] And tradition has it that he died after a long life in A.D. 1137.

He was born in Śrīperambattur (about 26 miles west of the city of Madras). Pandit Rama Misra Sāstrin of the Benares Sanskrit College, who has collected much traditional information concerning Rāmānuja and his sect, informs us that Rāmānuja's father was Keśava, a Dravida Brahman of the family of Herita, and his mother's name was Kāntimati.[3] The first guru of young

[1] R. G. Bhandarkar, *Vaisnavism, Saivism*, etc., Strasburg, 1913, p. 51.
[2] Radhakrishnan, *The Vedanta*, Allen & Unwin, London, 1928, p. 231.
[3] Urquhart, *The Vedanta and Modern Thought*, p. 61.

Rāmānuja was his maternal uncle, Sailapurāṇa, who was a great scholar of the Rāmāyana.

His youth was spent in Conjeevaram where he studied under Yādavaprākaśa, an Advaita philosopher of the school of Śaṅkara. But Rāmānuja's Vaishṇavite upbringing rebelled against the advaitic monism: it did not satisfy his religious nature. "Real religion", says Cardinal Newman, "is founded on a true perception of the relation of the soul to God and of God to the soul." Rāmānuja's religious nature demanded such a real relationship between a real Īśvara and a real jīva in a real world. The distinction that Śaṅkara-advaita had drawn between the transcendental Brahman and the empirical Īśvara, and the Śaṅkarite doctrine of the world as illusion proved unacceptable to young Rāmānuja's religious enthusiasm. The inevitable result was that he left Yādavaprakāśa.

He now turned his attention to the writings of the Āḻvārs. He studied the Āchāryas. Tradition has it that his fame for learning had spread far and wide, and even the presiding āchārya of the times, Āḷavandār, at his famous mutt in Śrīrangam, near Trichinopoly, came to be impressed by the promising young scholar. Āḷavandār desired that Rāmānuja should succeed him. When Āḷavandār felt that his end was drawing near, he hurriedly despatched his favourite pupil Periyanambi to Conjeevaram to fetch Rāmānuja. But it was too late. When Rāmānuja reached Śrīrangam the venerable āchārya had passed on. According to tradition, when Rāmānuja approached the dead body, he discovered that three of the five fingers of the great guru's right hand were folded. It was explained to him that he had died with three ambitions unfulfilled, the chief of which was a commentary on the Brahma Sūtras written from the point of view of the beliefs of the Vishṇuites. Rāmānuja returned to Conjeevaram pondering on this.

In time Rāmānuja finally renounced the world, gave up his wife,[1] assumed the robes of a sannyāsi and accepted the role of successor to the famous Āḷavandār of Śrīrangam. This place became, henceforth, his headquarters; and so it continued, except for the time he was driven into exile by Śaiva persecution, and during one long journey, which Rāmānuja is reported to have undertaken with a view to spreading his doctrine.

The Chola prince of the time was a Śaivite. He threatened to persecute Rāmānuja for his Vaishṇavite heterodoxy. He even commanded Rāmānuja to recant his views. Rāmānuja chose to flee and took refuge with the Yādava princes at their capital in Dvarasamudra, the modern Halebid in the state of Mysore. He

[1] Radhakrishnan, *The Vedanta*, Allen & Unwin, London, 1928, p. 232.

is there said to have succeeded in converting the local governor to his faith; but this seems improbable because the name of the governor was already Vishṇuite.[1] The fact would seem to be that the royal court looked with favour on the Āchārya and possibly supported him with means to carry on his work while in exile from Śrīrangam.

Rāmānuja was a great writer. Several books are attributed to him: among them the authentic are, *Śrībāshya* (which is a commentary on the Brahma Sūtras), *Gītābhāsya* (a commentary on the Bhagvad Gītā), *Vedārtha Saṁgraha*, *Vedāntasāra*, *Vedāntadīpa*, and *Gādyatrayam*. This last is a prose work which is composed of three smaller volumes called *Śrīgādyam*, *Saraṇagatigādyam*, and *Bṛihadgādyam*.

"The first three", says Dr. Sukhtankar,[2] "are undoubtedly by Rāmānuja. The phraseology, modes of expression as well as complete agreement in view, leave no room for doubt." The *Vedārthasaṁgraha* was the first, or at any rate preceded the commentary on the Sūtras. For we find two references[3] in the *Śrībhāshya* to the *Vedārthsaṁgraha*. The *Gītābhāshya* was written after the *Śrībhāshya* for we notice, for instance, a long quotation from the latter in the former, in the commentary on Gītā, XIII, 2.

The *Vedārthasaṁgraha* is a polemical treatise. In it Rāmānuja attempts to show that his interpretation of the Upanishadic texts quoted to support the Kevalādvaitin view of the Brahman are more trustworthy. He also disagrees with the interpretations of the Vedānta by writers preceding him, and, in particular, with Śaṅkara. His difference with Śaṅkara is set forth in a rival commentary that Rāmānuja wrote on the classical Brahma Sūtras. This is the *Śrībhāshya* of Rāmānuja, which stands over against the Śaṅkara *bhāshya*.

"The intrinsic value of the Śrībhāshya is—as every student acquainted with it will be ready to acknowledge—a very high one; it strikes one throughout as a very solid performance due to a writer of extensive learning and great power of argumentation; and in its polemic parts, directed chiefly against the School of Śaṅkara, it not infrequently deserves to be called brilliant even. And, in addition to all this, it shows evident traces of being not the mere outcome of Rāmānuja's individual views, but resting on an old and weighty tradition."[4] So writes Thibaut who has rendered an able English translation of both the bhāshyas.

Rāmānuja's purpose in writing the Bhāshya is stated at the

[1] *Imperial Gazetteer*, xviii, p. 173.

[2] V. A. Sukhtankar, *Teachings of Vedānta According to Ramanuja*, *W.Z.K.M.*, xxii, p. 122.

[3] Thibaut's Trans., *S.B.E.*, xlviii, pp. 78, 138.

[4] *Ibid.*, xxxiv, p. xviii.

very outset of the work. "The nectar of the teaching of Parasara's son (Vyāsa)—which was brought up from the middle of the milk-ocean of the Upanishads—which restores to life the souls whose vital strength had departed owing to the heat of the fire of transmigratory existence—which was well guarded by the teachers of old—which was obscured by the mutual conflict of manifold opinions—may intelligent men daily enjoy that as it is now presented to them in my words."[1]

The "manifold opinions" of conflicting interpreters really fall into three groups, the three classes of "deluded followers of Vedānta", *Vedā-valambi-kudrishṭi.*[2] First among these comes the *Māyāvādin,* the Illusionist. According to him, not only the world of matter, including our bodies, sense-organs, and the feelings of pleasure-pain reactions, etc., but even our ego-consciousness as individual selves is an illusion. The only reality is the Brahman. And that is undifferentiated, pure "consciousness". The other two groups, on the other hand, admit that the world of sense-experience is real: but, in the final analysis, that, too, is the same as the Brahman. We do have individuality as selves, which is due to the fact that, when Brahman comes into contact with material bodies, all matter becomes upādhis or limiting adjuncts on the pure consciousness of Brahman. Consequently life becomes differentiated and we have individuals. So far the two schools agree. But when they come to interpret the nature of the relationship between the Brahman and the individual self, the two schools differ. One of them, under the leadership of Bhāśkara (ninth century A.D.), holds that the *jīva,* individual self, is naturally one with the Brahman. So that under the influence of the upādhis, the Brahman, as the jīva, actually undergoes all the varied experiences of life in a series of births and deaths in the *saṁsāra*-circuit of transmigration.[3]

The other school, however, contends that although the Brahman through the upādhis is *in* the individual *jīva,* it remains unsullied, maintaining its pristine purity in spite of the vicissitudes of transmigration. Their spokesman is the same Yādavaprakāśa who lived in the eleventh century A.D. at Conjeevaram, and was for some time the guru of Rāmānuja. His theory is called the theory of *Bhedhābheda,* "simultaneous difference and non-difference". "Yādava does not find any contradiction in saying that a thing can be different and, at the same time, non-different from itself. He says that all things present themselves under these different

[1] Thibaut's Trans., *S.B.E.*, xlviii, p. 3.

[2] Vedārthsaṁgraha, translation in the *Pandit,* pp. 149 ff.

[3] *Jīvaparayos ca svabhāviko'bheda aupādikās tu bhedah,* Bhās'karabhāṣya, IV, 4, 4. *Ibid.*, IV, 4, 15, II, 3, 18.

aspects. They present non-difference so far as their causal substance (kāraṇa) and class characters (jāti) are concerned."[1] But according to this view, Brahman and matter are essentially (svabhāvika) non-different, and also accidentally (aupādhika) different.[2]

As against these three schools of Vedānta, Rāmānuja defends his own position. He claims that none of them conform to the teachings of the Upanishads; besides, they are not logically coherent in their interpretations. Rāmānuja maintains that not only the world but also the individual souls in it are real. Neither of them is essentially the same as the Brahman. "But still Brahman and the entire world form a unity; because both matter and individual souls have no existence but as the 'body' of Brahman, i.e. they can exist and be what they are and can act only because Brahman is their soul (Ātman) and the inwardly controlling power (ataryāmin). Apart from Brahman they are nothing."[3]

According to Rāmānuja, the Upanishadic teaching about the highest self does not refer to the First Principle as devoid of attributes. On the contrary, the Brahman of the Upanishads is the Supreme Being, endowed with all imaginable auspicious qualities. Śaṅkara is wrong when he describes it as "pure intelligence". Intelligence is only one attribute, the chief among them. Moreover, in this Being are comprised distinct elements of plurality. These elements when differentiated are as real as the Brahman itself. Everything that we meet with in our experience is an essential constituent of Brahman's nature. They may be either matter, in all its modifications (acit), or individual soul (cit), of different classes and degrees, making the sum-total of this organic world of nature. The Lord pervades and governs both material and immaterial things in this organic and inorganic world as their antaryāmin, inward controller. In justification of this theory of Brahman, Rāmānuja quotes Bṛihadāraṇyaka, III, 7.

Matter (acit) and souls (cit) are called modes, *prākāra*, of Brahman. They do not at any time themselves become Brahman, though they are for ever changing in condition. At the end of every aeon or *kalpa*, both matter and individual souls are in a state of *pralaya*; they are in inchoate, germinal condition. That is the state in which Brahman is described in the Śruti; when it is Absolute, one only without a second. Rāmānuja calls this a state of causal gestation (kāraṇāvastha) on the part of the Brahman. Matter, then, is unevolved (avyakta) and the individual souls are not joined to material bodies. Their intelligence is in a state of contraction, non-manifestation (saṅkoca). When the

[1] Radhakrishnan, *The Vedanta*, Allen & Unwin, London, 1928, p. 237.
[2] Thibaut's Trans., *S.B.E.*, xlviii, pp. 189–93.
[3] V. A. Sukhtankar, *W.K.Z.M.*, xxii, p. 126.

praḷaya state comes to an end, creation takes place as a result of volition on the part of the Lord.

All individual souls are involved in *saṁsāra*. As the result of actions committed in a previous existence they are what they are in this present life: and all actions they commit in this present life would determine their state in the next life. And so the cycle of birth, action and death goes on endlessly: unless an effort is made to secure final release. This is effected, Rāmānuja says, through the study of the Jñānakāṇda of the Scriptures. The way of deliverance is through jñāna (knowledge). But this jñāna, as Rāmānuja interprets it, is meditation which leads to perception of oneness with the Brahman. "The root of bondage", the Śaṅkarite declares, "is the unreal view of plurality which itself has its root in the avidyā which conceals the true being of Brahman. Bondage itself, thus, is unreal, and is on that account cut asunder by mere knowledge. Such knowledge is inspired by the Upanishadic text, 'That art Thou'; and work is of no help either towards its nature or its origination, or its fruit (i.e. release). . . . To this argumentation we make the following reply (so Rāmānuja contends in his Bhāshya): We admit that release consists only in the cessation of Nescience, and that this cessation results entirely from the knowledge of Brahman. But a distinction has here to be made regarding the nature of this knowledge which the Vedānta texts aim at enjoining for the purpose of putting an end to Nescience. Is it merely the knowledge of the sense of sentences which originate from the sentences? Or is it knowledge in the form of meditation (upāsana) which has the knowledge just referred to as its antecedent?"[1]

Here Rāmānuja sets forth his doctrine of grace. The cognition of the ultimate reality of God is a "gift" (prasādam). The soul, thus emancipated, goes up to the world of Brahman and enters into everlasting happiness. The released soul does not merge into the absolute perfection of the Brahman. It retains its individuality but participates in all the splendour of Brahman, sharing all His powers and qualities, excepting only His power to "emit, rule and retract the whole world".

3

THE WORLD AS THE BODY OF BRAHMAN

Brahman is known to us, according to Rāmānuja, "as possessing supreme greatness (bṛihattva) and power of growth (bṛihṁhaṇa)—

[1] Thibaut's Trans., *S.B.E.*, xlviii, pp. 11, 12.

this being the meaning of the root *bṛiṁh* (from which 'Brahman' is derived). Of this Brahman, thus already known (on the basis of etymology), the origination, sustentation, and reabsorption of the world are collateral marks".[1] Or again, "The word 'Brahman' denotes the highest Person (purushottama) who is essentially free from all imperfections and possesses numberless classes of auspicious qualities of unsurpassable excellence . . . (it) primarily denotes that which possesses greatness, of essential nature as well as of qualities, in unlimited fulness; and such is only the Lord of all."[2]

From the very outset, it is made perfectly clear that Brahman, to Rāmānuja, is a Person. God is not to be regarded as impersonal. He is not without qualities. Indeed he is very definitely identified with Vishṇu-Vāsudeva-Krishṇa.[3] Brahman is described (in Sūtra I, 1, 2) as "the Cause of the creation, sustenance and dissolution". He is in a very real sense responsible for the creation and dissolution of the World.

On this statement of Rāmānuja about Brahman as the ultimate source of all things hinges the problem we are now investigating. But we must remember that creation, to Rāmānuja, does not mean creation out of nothing, nor does dissolution mean dissolution into nothing. Moreover, "creation, sustenance and dissolution" are not brought about by an external agent; they are acts from within, immanent.

Rāmānuja does not believe in absolute non-existence (tuccata). Although he admits that there is relative non-existence (asattva). When a thing possesses the characteristics that we associate with it generally, we say that it exists. But when we do not find in it the characteristics we generally associate with it we would not admit that such a thing existed. Only as long as a jar possesses "a broad base, the shape of a belly, etc.", we say that a jar exists; but if that clay has the shape of potsherds we would say that the jar does not exist. "Existence and non-existence are attributes of a substance." Therefore creation and destruction are different states of the same substance. "When a substance (dravya) undergoes different states in succession, there occurs the 'destruction' of the substance in the previous state, and the 'creation' of the substance in the present state, but the substance remains the same in all its states."[4]

This is the old doctrine of *Satkāryavāda*, i.e. the theory that the effect (kārya) is existent in the cause (kāraṇa).[5] Or, as it is sometimes interpreted, "the effect is non-different from the cause".[6] This conception of the identity of cause and effect is an

[1] Thibaut's Trans., *S.B.E.*, xlviii, p. 158.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 4.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 525.
[4] *Pandit*, p. 456.
[5] *Kāraṇe kāryasya sattvam.*
[6] *Karaṇād ananyat kāryam.*

orthodox doctrine of Vedānta schools in general. Both Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja trace its origin to the famous passage in the sixth chapter of Chāndogya Upanishad, where the oneness of the world and the Brahman is illustrated by the example of the clod of earth, the piece of copper and a pair of nail-scissors, all of which are after all the same as the original substance from which they are produced. But the interpretation that the two commentators put on the words *vacārambhaṇam*, *vikāro*, *nāmadheyam* varies. Śaṅkara says, "The modification (vikāra) originates and exists merely in speech. In reality there is no such thing as effect. It is merely a name and therefore unreal."[1] This rendering of the original is by no means correct: but Śaṅkara maintains that only by accepting the unreality of the effect can we understand the identity of the cause and effect. Literally translated, the words would mean "beginning with speech, a modification, a name". That the modification originates merely in the use of language, and is merely in the "name" is Śaṅkara's claim. Even so, to conclude that the effect does not actually exist is unwarranted. Rāmānuja contends that such an interpretation would make the real and the unreal one and the same—whether that real is Brahman and the unreal is the world, or vice versa.[2] In denying reality to change, Śaṅkara would seem to deny all causality. Because in order that a cause (kāraṇa) may be a cause, there must be an effect (kārya). Rāmānuja also points out that one of the corollaries of the Satkāryavāda doctrine is that by knowing the cause you know the effect. If Śaṅkara's interpretation were valid then, the effect (the world of sense-experience) being unreal, there is nothing to be known.

In commenting upon the Sūtra, I, 1, 2, which describes Brahman as the cause from which the world proceeds, Rāmānuja makes it clear that the Brahman is at once the material as well as the efficient cause. He emphatically rejects the existence of matter (Pradhāna or Prakṛiti) and of individual souls *independent* of the Brahman. His purpose is thus to emphasize the oneness of Brahman, as the one only without a second. Matter and the individual souls can only be known in association with Brahman—not by themselves. This seems to be the vital, though not the only, point of difference between the Viśishṭādvaita and the Sāṁkhya; Rāmānuja is in general agreement with the details of that system in other respects. In his Bhāshya on the Sūtra II, 3, 9, he describes the world as consisting of "avyakta, mahat, ahaṅkāra, tanmātras, indriyas, etc.", for instance. He believes that the soul, by erroneously imputing to itself the attributes of Prakṛiti, becomes the cause of the modifications affected by transmigration. Even the

[1] Thibaut, *S.B.E.*, xxxiv, pp. 320 ff.

[2] *Ibid.*, xlviii, pp. 454 ff.

order of evolution he advocates is almost the same as that of Sāṁkhya. And he admits that Prakṛiti possesses the three guṇas of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. He also agrees with Sāṁkhya in admitting that there are many *purushas*. But he holds that the Sāṁkhya cannot solve the problem of the periodical origination (śrishṭi) and dissolution (pralaya) of the world inasmuch as Prakṛiti (matter) is unconscious (jaḍa) and the Purushas are eternally without activity and without change; therefore, there cannot be any conscious cause in operation. Moreover, on the Sāṁkhya dualism, he finds it impossible to account for the suffering and the release of the Purushas.[1]

When Rāmānuja asserts that the material, as well as the efficient, cause of the world is Brahman, and Brahman alone, he is not blind to the fact that he is getting himself involved in a very serious issue—the problem of theodicy.

We know that the world consists of souls which are merged in ignorance and suffering, as well as of matter which is without consciousness and always changing. If the world be the same as Brahman, the suffering of the individual *jīvas* ought to be attributed to Brahman. Such a conclusion is revolting to religious consciousness. Śaṅkara had cleverly escaped that difficulty by declaring that the only reality is Brahman, which is eternally undifferentiated, objectless consciousness, and that all-plurality of things and individual souls is nothing but illusion.

In meeting this problem of theodicy, Rāmānuja brings forward a theory that reminds us once again of the Hindu tendency to think of the universe in terms of the human. The anthropo-analogical method of approach to the problems of the universe, to which we drew attention earlier on in our investigation, as prevalent even in the times of the Veda, is now worked out on all fours by Rāmānuja. He invokes the authority of several Upanishadic quotations to prove his contention that "all Upanishads teach that the entire world, whether in a gross state or in a subtle one, and comprising both souls and matter, is the body of Brahman".[2]

Rāmānuja defines "body" as "any substance which a conscious being (cetana) completely controls and supports for its own purpose and whose only nature consists in being subservient to the conscious being".[3] "The whole world with its souls and matter is the body of Brahman, because it is completely controlled and

[1] Thibaut, *S.B.E.*, xlviii, pp. 424, 425, 480–95.

[2] *Brih. Up.*, III, 7; *Chānd.*, VI, 8, 7; *Tait.*, II, 6; *Muṇḍ.*, III, 1, 4; *Chānd.*, V, 18, etc.

[3] Tarkaratna, Ramanatha, in *Pandit*, Benares edition, Śrī-Bhāshya, p. 284.

supported by Brahman and has the only nature of being subservient to it".[1]

What does this conception of the world as Brahman's "body" imply? According to Rāmānuja's own definition of the term "body", its essence consists in being subservient to the soul embodied in it. Therefore, the body cannot have an existence independent of the soul. Just as class-characteristics (jāti) cannot exist except in connection with an individual of that class, or just as a quality cannot exist independent of the substance which it qualifies, so a body cannot exist apart from the soul embodied in it. The body is a "mode" (prakāra) of the soul. The soul is the only substrate of the body; when the soul departs the body perishes. The soul is the only final cause (prayojana) of the body, because the body exists only as a distinguishing attribute (viśeshaṇa) of the soul. Since all souls are alike, the distinction between them as a man or a woman, as a celestial or a human being, can only belong to the bodies they occupy. Therefore, Rāmānuja says, since the world is Brahman's body all things in it, physical or psychical, can exist only as "modes" of Brahman. It is only as the "body" of Brahman that the world derives its reality (vastutva). And in so far as these are "modes", the "body" of the Brahman, all things referring to the world must at the same time signify the Brahman.

But there is an assumption in regard to the world that Rāmānuja takes for granted. He believes in repeated creation and dissolution of the world. "The stream of creation is without beginning."[2] At the end of each kalpa (world-period), the world is dissolved; the grosser substances dissolve themselves into the subtler ones, till at last ultra-subtle matter, called "darkness" (tamas), is alone left. When the world is in this state, Brahman is said to be as in Chānd. Up., VI, 2, 1, "One only, without a second".[3] But even in this state of non-separation, the souls, together with matter, both reduced to extremely subtle condition, exist as the body of Brahman.[4] The "darkness", tamas, does not get altogether lost in Brahman, but becomes one with it (ekibhavati) and is no more distinguished by "names and forms".[5] But only when the world is distinguished by "names and forms" has it the attribute of existence, and when this distinction vanishes the world has the attribute of non-existence.[6] That is to say, when there is no distinction of "names and forms", Brahman is "one" and the "cause" of the world; when there is distinction of "names and forms" the Brahman is known as "manifold", the "effect" of

[1] Tarkaratna, Ramanatha, in *Pandit*, Benares edition, Śrī-Bhāshya, p. 286; cf. Thibaut, p. 424. [2] *S.B.E.*, vol. xlviii, p. 505.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 374. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 544. [5] *Ibid.*, p. 456. [6] *Ibid.*, p. 557.

the world. "When Brahman is in the causal state," says Rāmānuja, "the world is in a state of dissolution (*natura naturans*); when it is in an effected state, the world is in the state of creation (*natura naturata*)."[1]

In the world of things, Rāmānuja makes a distinction between individual souls and matter. "The soul", he defines, "is created by Brahman, is controlled by it, is its body, is subservient to it, is reduced to the 'subtle' condition by it (i.e. in the dissolution state of the world), is a worshipper of it, and depends on its grace for its welfare."[2]

Brahman is said to exist together with individual souls in different bodies. But when the body suffers and undergoes all the vicissitudes of life's varied experiences of joys and sorrows and pleasure and pain, it is the individual soul, the jīva, that shares them. Not the Brahman. For the Brahman is not subject to *karma*. He is beyond it. It is the individual soul that is subject to it.

"The Lord", says Rāmānuja, "having prescribed that certain works are proper and others improper, supplied all individual souls with bodies, sense-organs, etc., needed to perform their works, and with power to employ them; reveals to them Scripture teachings for right conduct; and Himself enters within them as their inward soul and abides there to control and to 'assent'."[3] Thus the freedom of the individual souls is safeguarded and the Brahman is freed from responsibility for the evil wrought by men. Rāmānuja makes this perfectly clear. "No action indeed is possible without the 'assent' (anumati) of the Inner Soul; but in all actions there is the volitional effort (prayatna) made by the individual soul; and the Supreme Soul, by giving His assent to it, carries out the action."[4] The individual soul being, therefore, ultimately responsible for his actions, "the Lord cannot be charged with arbitrariness for rewarding those who obey His commandments and punishing those who transgress them. Nor can He be accused of being merciless. Because mercy shown to persons who are given to transgressing the right rule of conduct does no good; on the contrary it produces weakness (apuṁstva). To chastise them is in this case the right thing. By chastising the transgressors and by not tolerating the infinite and unbearable sins gathered during the endless ages, God Himself helps to increase happiness to the highest degree".[5]

[1] Cf. Pandit, *Commentary on Sūtra*, II, 3, 41, Benares edition.

[2] Pandit, p. 402; cf. *Vedārthasaṅgraha*, Benares edition, p. 140.

[3] *S.B.E.*, xlviii, p. 557.

[4] *Ibid.* Cf. Pandit, p. 563; *Commentary on Sūtra* II, 3, 41, Benares edition.

[5] Pandit, p. 402; cf. *Vedārthasaṅgraha*, Benares edition, p. 140.

The world of matter (acit, prakṛiti), on the other hand, unlike the individual souls (jīva) is more completely dependent on the Brahman. The souls can will an action; but matter, being unconscious, has no power of its own. Everything that matter does is performed with Brahman as its soul. In explaining the world of matter, Rāmānuja finds the anthropo-analogical scheme of explanation the best. As the body of Brahman, it is a distinguishing attribute (viśeshaṇa) of the object distinguished (viśishṭa). The attribute is essentially different from the object distinguished; but it cannot exist independently of the thing it qualifies. John Smith's body without the "ego" John Smith is unintelligible, not valid: and in every bit of John Smith's body there *is* John Smith. So you cannot conceive of the world as apart from Brahman. Just as every remote part of the human organism is "realized" indirectly by the Ego, so it would appear in Rāmānuja's thought that "all (material) things have their reality, only because the individual souls, having Brahman for their Soul, have entered them".[1] Thus it comes about that all individual material things in this world are directly the bodies of individual souls; and indirectly of Brahman, as Brahman is the soul of the individual soul.

Rāmānuja thus sums up his conclusions: "The authoritative books do *not* teach the doctrine of one undifferentiated substance: they do not teach that the universe of things is false; they do not deny the distinction of intelligent beings, non-intelligent beings and the Lord."[2]

We noticed in our discussion of Śaṅkara's Advaitic monism that he is compelled to resort to the doctrine of Māyā because he is convinced that the Upanishadic teaching about Brahman is that of an undifferentiated, objectless First Principle. That would be from the standpoint of "vidyā", knowledge. All this seeming multiplicity of this illusory universe is due to "Avidyā", ignorance. In his teaching, we also noticed that he ascribes to *Avidyā* very much the same functions as he assigns to Māyā. In fact, in his commentary on Sūtra I, 4, 3,[3] the two ideas are combined. The causal potentiality of Brahman is of the "nature of nescience, avidyā", as well as of "the nature of an illusion, Māyā". Again, in commenting on Sūtra II, 1, 6,[4] Śaṅkara speaks of the "fallacious superimpositions of nescience", and in II, 1, 4,[5] he characterizes "name and form", *nāmarūpa*, as the "presentations of nescience". In II, 1, 28,[6] he calls nature "a mere figment of nescience".

Rāmānuja seems to take both Avidyā and Māyā as different

[1] Pandit, p. 215. Cf. *Vedārthasaṅgraha*, Benares edition, p. 28.
[2] *S.B.E.*, xlviii, p. 102; *op. cit.*, pp. 78 ff. [3] *Ibid.*, xxxiv, p. 243.
[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 305, 306. [5] *Ibid.*, p. 300. [6] *Ibid.*, p. 352.

ways of describing the same "mysterious", "inexplicable" power which produces the more or less unreal world of ordinary experience. The metaphysical principle of Māyā is ultimately grounded in the epistemological concept of Avidya. So Rāmānuja levels his artillery against Avidyā, in attacking the Śaṅkarite doctrine of Māyā.

Śaṅkara defines Avidyā as both existence and non-existence, sat-asat. Therefore, in the final analysis, māyā is inexplicable, anirvacanīyata. Rāmānuja objects: "A thing of such a nature would be inexplicable indeed; for none of the means of knowledge apply to it. That is to say, the whole world of objects must be ordered according to our states of consciousness, and every state of consciousness presents itself in the form, either of something existing or of something non-existing. . . . If, therefore, we should assume that, of states of consciousness which are limited to this double form, the object can be something which is neither existing nor non-existing, then anything whatever might be the object of any state of consciousness whatever."[1]

Rāmānuja asks that the Avidyā-Māyā conception should be treated with such thoroughness that the Kevalādvaitin apologetic for it feels no need to take refuge in the claim that after all it is really inexplicable. He should not, at one and the same time, admit this "inexplicability" and yet continue to use it as a metaphysical principle. Just because of its "inexplicability", asks Rāmānuja, is it also exempt from criticism? A principle is either something or nothing. If it is nothing, it cannot be used to explain the world. If it is something, it must be treated as a positive, and held up for investigation. One cannot be both agnostic and dogmatic.

Again, Rāmānuja does not see how the illu[illegible] Māyā could be related to Brahman. If, as the [illegible] cause and effect are identical, how can Brahman, as reality, be identical with that which is illusory?[2]

What is the seat (āśraya) of avidyā? Rāmānuja asks. It cannot be the "individual soul"; "for the individual self exists only in so far as it is fictitiously imagined through Nescience. Nor can you say 'Brahman'; for Brahman is nothing but self-luminous intelligence, and hence contradictory in nature to avidyā which is avowedly sublated by knowledge".[3] It is illogical, on the face of it, then, to claim that Brahman, whose essential nature is knowledge, could be clouded by Nescience; especially so, when that Nescience, it is maintained, terminates by knowledge.

If what terminated the reign of avidyā is the knowledge that Brahman is pure knowledge, Rāmānuja argues, "If there exists

[1] *S.B.E.*, xlviii, p. 106. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 103. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 104.

the knowledge that Brahman is knowledge, then Brahman is an object of knowledge; but, according to your (the Śaṅkarite's) own teaching, Brahman is not of the nature of consciousness."[1] The Brahman of Śaṅkara is pure consciousness; it is free from attributes, which are objects of consciousness.

Moreover, Brahman's nature is homogeneous intelligence. Avidyā is supposed to hide it altogether, envelop it with a sort of a veil. "Causing light to disappear means either obstructing the origination of light, or else destroying light that exists. And as . . . that light (Brahman's consciousness which is self-luminous) cannot originate, the 'hiding' or 'making to disappear' of light can only mean its destruction."[2] Māyā-Avidyā would then not only give us an unreal world, but actually destroy Brahman's essential nature. The Vishṇuite felt this acutely.

If Māyā is real (for it is claimed that Māyā is really responsible for the world of sense-perceptions, seeming though they be) and if its abolition (nivṛitti) is brought about by knowledge of Brahman, Rāmānuja argues further, then such knowledge cannot be the higher vidyā of which Śaṅkara speaks. Such a knowledge is impossible, because the individual Ātman is itself Brahman. And Rāmānuja adds, "Knowledge cannot destroy a real thing",[3] though it might destroy a particular *idea* we might have about it.

If, on the other hand, māyā is unreal (and so avidyā), what is there to destroy? Since, as Śaṅkara admits, knowledge destroys māyā it cannot be real. If it is unreal, it does not function, it cannot be the śakti of the Real Brahman. The whole process of salvation is a huge joke; it implies being saved from the clutches of an Avidyā which actually is not.

Finally, "The assertion that Nescience, avidyā, rests on the authority of Scripture is untrue."[4] Rāmānuja subjects to critical analysis the various passages quoted in support of such a thesis and points out what they are really supposed to mean. "The real avidyā to which we are victims is that power of illusion which makes us believe that we ourselves and the world are independent of Brahman."[5] Later on, Rāmānuja says, "Let us then define *avidyā* as the cause of a disadvantageous cognition of unreal things."[6] And such avidyā, when it assumes the aspect of confusing the real Brahman because of its associations with matter from the mind of the seeker, can be dispelled only by the exercise of "meditation".[7]

The term "Māyā", according to Rāmānuja, "denotes wonderful things"[8]—things that have a wonderful nature, but not illusions.

[1] *S.B.E.*, xlviii, p. 104. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 105. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 116.
[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 124 ff. [5] Radhakrishnan, *The Vedānta*, p. 268.
[6] Thibaut, *S.B.E.*, xlviii, p. 442. [7] *Ibid.*, p. 602. [8] *Ibid.*, p. 602.

There is no scriptural passage, he contends, where the word māyā denotes that which is undefinable. "But the word 'māyā' is synonymous with 'mithya', i.e. falsehood, and hence denotes the undefinable also. This, too, we cannot admit; for the word 'māyā' does not in all places refer to what is false; we see it applied, e.g., to such things as the weapons of Asuras and Rākshasas, which are not 'false' but real. 'Māyā' in such passages really denotes that which produces various wonderful effects, and it is in this sense that Prakṛiti is called Māyā. This appears from the passages (Śvet. Up., IV, 9), 'From that the Māyin creates all this and in that the other one is bound up by māyā. For this text declares that Prakṛiti—there called Māyā—produces manifold creations, and the highest Person is there called 'māyin' because he possesses that power of māyā."[1]

Rāmānuja boldly identifies the world of perpetual change, so marvellous in many respects as to transcend the categories of human reason, the ever-changing Prakṛiti, with the term Māyā. It would then mean *not* this illusory world (as Śaṅkara interprets it), but this wonderful world. And Prakṛiti, as has already been pointed out, is a mode (prakāra) of the eternal Brahman: as such, it can only be conceived as dependent on Him, and not apart from Him. In common parlance, then, the world comprising, as it does, men (conscious beings) and inert matter (which on ultimate analysis is really "energy") is meaningless without Brahman, just as the body of any particular person is meaningless without reference to the "soul" that inhabits it.

From the standpoint of epistemology, Rāmānuja questions Śaṅkara's statement that objects do not exist simply because they do not persist. He admits that two cognitions mutually contradictory cannot be both real. But in the world we are concerned with things that are removed in space and time. "Jars, pieces of cloth and the like do not contradict one another, since they are separate in place and time. If the non-existence of a thing is cognized, we have mutual contradiction of two cognitions. But when a thing is perceived in connection with some other place and time, there arises no contradiction."[2]

All knowledge reveals objects, because knowledge involves the perception of difference. Every clear conception arises through some distinction marking off *this* from *that*. According to Śaṅkara, when we say, "That art thou", *tat tvam asi*, we assert the real identity of the two; the difference being merely apparent. Rāmānuja maintains, on the contrary, that all identity and difference apply to terms which are on the same level of reality.

[1] Thibaut, *S.B.E.*, xlviii, pp. 125, 126. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 47.

Every judgment illustrates the fact that all identity is an identity in and through difference.

While all knowledge is of the real (*sarvam vijñātam yathārtham*),[1] Rāmānuja takes care to add that the knowledge is not of the whole of reality. Some aspects of reality are left out. This predicament will always be so until the individual knower is freed from *saṁsāra*. The ideal of perfect knowledge is only for the jīva that is freed from the round of re-births. Meanwhile what we call "true" and "false" knowledge is based on pragmatic considerations. For instance, "the mirage is an error, not because the element of water is not present in it, but because the water does not quench our thirst. The true is what represents the real (yathārtha) and what is practically useful (vyavhāraguṇa)".[2]

But mere thought by itself cannot bring us face to face with Ultimate Reality. For Brahman is not an object of perception.[3] Only through intuition (sākshātkara), which is not logical knowledge, can anyone grasp Reality.[4] This is the highest knowledge; and it involves the non-cognitive elements of the individual soul. Such knowledge is only put within our reach by divine grace and in response to meditation on the part of the seeker. The reaching forth of the individual soul with its thought-life systematized, its feelings transformed and its will disciplined is met by the Supreme Person, the Brahman, by a responsive revelation; it is intuitively realized by the seeker. The individual soul, in this state, is *en rapport* with the Brahman; it is not merged in the Absolute perfection of the "undifferentiated, objectless Brahman" as Śaṅkara taught; the devotee remains a separate individual.

This state of "perfect conciliation or endearment, i.e. in meditation bearing the character of devotion",[5] when experience of Brahman is attained, is called *Prāptti*, complete resignation to God. Six factors are distinguished in Prāptti: (1) Acquisition of qualities which would make one a fit offering to God (anukūlyasya sampattih); (2) avoidance of conduct not acceptable to God (prāti-kūlyasa varijaṇam); (3) faith that God would protect one (rakshishyatiti viśvāsah); (4) appeal for protection (goptṛtvavaraṇam); (5) a feeling of one's own littleness (kārpaṇyam); and (6) absolute surrender (ātmasamarpaṇam).[6]

The Vishṇuite creed is a realistic faith in a redeeming God. He is ultimately one and real. Even so is the individual soul struggling for emancipation from a very real thraldom in a world

[1] Thibaut, *S.B.E.*, xlviii, pp. 119 ff.
[2] Radhakrishnan, *The Vedānta*, p. 242.
[3] Thibaut, *S.B.E.*, xlviii, p. 162.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 15.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 617.
[6] Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, ii, p. 706.

of actualities. No wonder that Rāmānuja vehemently expresses his dissent to the theory of Māyā. His protest is scathing: "This entire theory rests on a fictitious foundation of altogether hollow and vicious arguments, incapable of being stated in definite logical alternatives, and devised by men who are destitute of those particular qualities which cause individuals to be chosen by the Supreme Person revealed in the Upanishads; whose intellects are darkened by the impression of beginningless evil; and who thus have no insight into the meaning of words and sentences, into the real purport conveyed by them, and into the procedure of sound argumentation, with all its methods depending on perception and other instruments of right knowledge. The theory therefore must need be rejected by all those who, through texts, perception, and other means of knowledge—assisted by sound reasoning—have an insight into the true nature of things."[1]

[1] Thibaut, *S.B.E.*, xlviii, p. 8.

CHAPTER VII

MĀYĀ AND THE VISHṆUITE SAMPRADĀYAS

I

MĀYĀ AND THE VISHṆUITE SAMPRADĀYAS

Rāmānuja was the first great religious philosopher after Śaṅkara to challenge the doctrine of Māyā. But many followed in his wake, vigorously [illegible] 'nst the illusion theory that Śaṅkara had enuncia[illegible] mysticism of the times was incompatible with such a world-view. "A copious literature in the form of Purāṇas and tracts in the Upanishadic style had long been growing. The cultus of Vishṇu in his Krishṇa manifestation had spread through the South, and awakened an active devotion . . . and later teachers were not slow to identify the Brahman of the Vedānta with Krishṇa."[1]

Vishṇu piety could not be satisfied with a cold intellectual approach to an impersonal Absolute: it could find no religious satisfaction in a world of "relative reality" in which even Īśvara was, after all, "a matter of (mere) words, a modification and a name" (vacārambhaṇam vikāro nāmadheyam).[2] Faith in a personal God had to be given a philosophic justification, and the reality of the world and the individuality of the souls that inhabited it had to be guaranteed. Rāmānuja's polemic against Māyāvāda had to be actively followed up. Vishṇuite scholars braced themselves to the task.

But the Śaṅkarites were not to be so easily intimidated. They, in turn, hastened to the defence of the teachings of their guru, and developed an apologetic literature of their own. Since the whole controversy pivoted on the central thesis of Śaṅkara about the nature of the Upanishadic Brahman and its ultimate identity with the Ātman, a good deal of attention was given, in this literature, to a justification of Śaṅkara's Māyāvāda. The Śaṅkarites felt that the integrity of the Upanishadic Brahman had to be maintained, and that the absolute validity of the world of sense-experience had to be discounted. Therefore, they sought to concede the fact of the immediate, positive, actuality of the world of Māyā; though from the standpoint of metaphysics it is unsubstantial.

The Śaṅkarites are all agreed that, in the Vedānta, Māyā is an important category. They use the terms Māyā, Avidyā and

[1] Carpenter, *Theism in Medieval India*, London, 1921, p. 404.
[2] *Śaṅkarabhāshya*, *S.B.E.*, xxxiv, p. 320.

Ajñāna interchangeably. But they show a preference to use the word Māyā for the dynamic and creative aspect of sense-experience, and apply the terms Avidyā and Ajñāna to signify the epistemological function of concealing from finite consciousness the ultimate truth of its identity with the Absolute. They are all agreed that the Brahman is an objectless, undifferentiated, static Absolute. The world of Māyā is therefore an appearance. They hold that Māyā is relatively real, though distinct from the Absolute reality; it has no definite beginning, and therefore it co-exists with the Absolute; it is positive, distinguished from *abhara* (negation); it is opposed to *vidyā* or intuitive knowledge of identity-consciousness with the Brahman; and it disappears with the dawn of this vidyā-realization.[1]

Representative among the followers of Śaṅkara who wrote in defence of Kevalādvaitism were Vacaspati (A.D. 850), Sarvajñātamuni (A.D. 900), Vidyāraṇya (A.D. 1400), Brahmānanda (A.D. 1500), Dharmarājādhivarindra (A.D. 1550), Madhusūdhana Sarasvatī (A.D. 1500), and Prakāśānanda (A.D. 1600). We shall here present a brief sketch of their teachings before we go on to discuss the polemic of the Vishṇuite theists against Māyāvāda.

Brahmānanda insists that the world-appearance verily has pragmatic validity. Although it has no absolute value, the world is, nevertheless, a positive content of experience. As long as practical reason prevails in the world of sense-categories, the realm of appearance, with its duality of subject and object, self and not-self, would find a place, side by side, with the transcendental realm of Being. Avidyā gives us knowledge of this dynamic world of Becoming. And, confined to this realm, Avidyā is positive and valid. In so far as Avidyā is responsible for the appearance of Becoming, Avidya has a creative functioning; and as Māyā, Avidyā is the appearance itself explainable only as Māyāśakti (mysterious energy) of Īśvara, the empirical Brahman, and ultimately of the absolute Brahman. This creative functioning of Māyā, its cosmological aspect, Brahmānanda particularly emphasizes. Its creative functioning, according to Brahmānanda, is twofold: on the one hand, it has the power of hiding things from view, and on the other, the power of individuation, of showing the One as Many.

Both Dharmarȳādhivarindra, the author of the *Vedāntaparibhāsha*, and Madhusūdhana Sarasvatī, who was responsible for the *Advaita Siddhi*, also discuss Māyā in this positive sense. But they go on to indicate that positiveness (bhāvatva) and truth are the same, for only that which exists eternally can be

[1] Cf. M. N. Sircar, *Comparative Studies in Vedantism*, Oxford, 1927, p. 152.

called true. In that sense, only Brahman is real. The reality of the absolute Brahman is due to its fixed and unchangeable nature. In this realm of transcendent Being, the Satkāryavāda contention of the identity of cause and effect does not apply. Therefore, the real can never be accepted as *causa materia* of this phenomenal world; if the "effect" is illusory we would then have to admit that the "cause" (Brahman, in this case) is also illusory. Effectual changes are only confined to the realm of Avidyā: only so long as we are in this illusory world are we apt to think in terms of cause and effect.[1]

Brahman, according to Madhusūdhana Sarasvatī, is intelligence. It is consciousness, but not self-consciousness; illumination but not self-illumination. Therefore it cannot be the object of perception, not even of immediate perception (sākshi, witness-intelligence). But when the individual jīva transcends the state of immediate perception and is completely isolated from all objects of knowledge, it realizes its Brahma-nature. Thus Avidyā has an end, although it has no beginning.

The difficulty in which the Śaṅkarites find themselves, when forced into controversy by contemporary Vishṇuites, is in explaining how the world could be based on Brahman and still be different from it. To connect the world of Becoming with the absolute Being by the Māyā-principle of illusion and to contend that, while Māyā affects the world, it leaves no trace at all on the Ultimate is no solution. The issue naturally involves the problem of "cause" and "effect". But causation is a relational concept, and the principle of identity which is the *summum bonum* as well as the fundamental thesis of the vidyā Self-realization denies all ultimate relation.

The Śaṅkarites, therefore, attempt to correlate *māyāvāda* with *vivarthavāda*. Vivarthavāda is the denial of causation and the assertion of identity. Sarvajñāta Muni (A.D. 900), the author of Saṁkshepaśārīka, argues very cleverly that all logical negations are preceded by affirmations. Before we claim that a thing "is not" we admit provisionally that it "is". Effectual transformation (pariṇaṁa) is a necessary precondition of the thought-process that leads to the assertion of identity (vivarthavāda). So we posit a world that is conditioned by causation through the law of causation, and then, to show that it is illusory, we deny it and assert the truth of the ultimate identity of everything that is.[2]

[1] *Advaita Siddhi*, Bib. Indica Series, p. 544.

[2] Vivartavādasya hi pūrvabhūmir
Vedāntavāde pariṇāmavādaḥ
Vyavasthi ' smin pariṇāmâvāde
Svayam samāyāti vivartavādaḥ

Saṁkshepaśārīraka, Benares edition, p. 40.

The difficulty in this explanation is that it tries to deal with the fact of the difference (*bheda*) between cause and effect and its ultimate identity at the same time. Vacaspati, the author of Bhāmati (A.D. 850), had already pointed out the obvious impossibility of such a procedure, because when we posit the world of difference (bheda), of cause and effect, we are still in the realm of the empirical, and therefore cannot grasp from that plane the ultimate truth of the identity of cause and effect. From the world of Becoming we cannot *argue* our way into the realm of pure Being; that is the significance of the Māyā-avidya concept of nescience.

Even if we could reason out the world of change as finally based on Brahman, Vidyāraṇya (A.D. 1400) points out that such a Brahman, being a concept in the avidyā-plane of sense categories, is *not* the Absolute Being. It is the pure Being limited by Māyā, Īśvara. His objectivity and personality is still conditioned by *our* sense-categories.

This line of thought is further developed by Prakāśānanda (A.D. 1600) who wrote the Advaita Siddhānta Muktāvali. He takes the position of a subjective idealist. The whole world-order including man, nature and God is the creation of avidyā. Avidyā is in itself nothing, not in any way connected with Brahman. Prakāśānanda does not believe that Māyā is a śakti of Brahman. Being alone is real and existent: Becoming is an illusion, a "hallucination" in fact; it therefore does not exist. "The wise", says Prakāśānanda, "consider the world as identical with consciousness, the ignorant as something objective."[1]

2

THE "DIFFERENCE WITHOUT DIFFERENCE" DOCTRINE OF NIMBĀRKA

The opposition to the rigorous monism of Śaṅkara that Rāmānuja had started was followed up by many of his younger contemporaries. One of them was Nimbārka, the "sun of Nimba" who was probably born in Nimbāpura in the Bellary District of modern India, and died about A.D. 1162. He was a devout Vishṇuite and an ardent advocate of the Kṛishna cult. He believed that Kṛishna was an incarnation of the supreme Brahman Himself. He wrote a brief commentary on the Brahma Sūtras and also set down in a pamphlet of ten verses (daśasloka) the sum and substance of his teachings. According to Nimbārka, there are

[1] M. N. Sircar, *Comparative Studies*, p. 131.

three entities: *cit*, the intelligent individual, *acit*, non-intelligent matter and Īśvara. The individual soul is *cit*, because it is of the nature of knowledge (*jñāna svarūpa*) and has knowledge for its attribute. It is individual (*ahamarthaḥ*) being different in different bodies. *Cit* is infinite in number and atomic in size.[1] Non-intelligent matter, acit, is of three kinds: *a-prakṛita*, primordial matter that is not derived from *prakṛiti; prakrata* or matter which is derived from *prakṛiti*, possessing the three *guṇas* of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* on the basis of the twenty-four principles of the Sāṁkhya system; and *Kāla*, or time. All these three categories are also as eternal as *cit*. Finally, there is the highest Self, the Brahman, whom Nimbārka calls Kṛishna. This Brahman is both the *causa materialis* (upadhāna) as well as the *causa efficiens* (nimitta) of the universe. The *cit* and the *acit* in their subtle form (*aṁśa*) are really the *śakti* (energy) of Brahman; as such the material cause of the world. From being "subtle" they (aṁśas)[2] become "gross" through the initiative of Brahman himself. Ultimately Brahman himself is also materially responsible for this modification (*pariṇāma*); so he is the efficient cause of the world as well.

Nimbārka calls his system "*bhedābheda vāda*", the theory of difference-non-difference. For this reason: while he lays emphasis upon the logic of difference in unity, he also expressly maintains that the entire existence is an integrity of Being. Both difference and non-difference are equally real. The *cit* and *acit* are different from Brahman: they are in the final analysis, described to be distinct from Brahman, as his śakti (aṁśa) or energy. At the same time, they are non-different from Brahman; they are, in a sense, absolutely dependent on Him and cannot have independent existence by themselves. As Ghate puts it: "*Bheda* or difference (to Nimbārka) means the possibility of an existence, which is separate, at the same time dependent (*para tantra sattabhava*), while a-bheda or non-difference means the impossibility of an independent existence (*svatantra sattabhavah*)."[3] Difference and non-difference, for Nimbārka, co-exist. They are both on the same level and are equally real.

Translating Nimbārka's metaphysics in terms of Śaṅkarite advaitism, the world of sense-perception is not Īśvara-Māyā, but Brahma-Māyā. And Māyā as śakti is directly allied to Brahman. The world is, therefore, a real manifestation of the ultimate

[1] P. Ghate, p. 95; *Nimbārka's Commentary on B.S.*, II, 3, 19–28.

[2] Bhāshya on II, 3, 43 "By aṁśa, or a part is not to be understood 'a piece cut and separated', for that would involve an absolute difference and would contradict such passages as 'that art thou'. But 'aṁśa' here means 'śakti' or capacity; and B. possesses various capacities which are of the nature of the animate and inanimate worlds." Ghate, p. 102.

[3] Ghate, *Vedanta*, p. 31.

Reality. Being is equated with Becoming: the Absolute is the sole Reality undoubtedly; but the world is both different and not different from it, at the same time.

From the standpoint of the religious theism of Rāmānuja, the Purushottama (the Highest Self) is immanent in the Prakṛiti, and in the jīvas that compose the manifold of life, both organic and inorganic. So God is "not-different" from the world. But, since the Purushottama (Highest Self) transcends the cosmos, being infinite (*sat-cit-ānanda*: perfect being, pure consciousness and absolute bliss), He is not identical with the cit-acit world of men and things, he is "different". Rāṁānuja is anxious to maintain the "unity" of God and the world, so he makes the world Īśvara's "body". Rāmānuja's *cit* and *acit* are prakāra, modes of Īśvara. To this Nimbārka objects. An attribute is by its nature meant to distinguish the thing that possesses the attribute from another which does not. But the *paramapurusha*, the Supreme Person, is unique. Therefore, Nimbārka suggests that *prakṛiti* and *jīvas*, *acit* and *cit*, should be considered as forming separate but dependent real entities along with the Brahman: what is different is also identical (*Bhedābheda*). Sircar rightly describes Nimbārka's system as "a pluralistic interpretation which he . . . seeks to avoid by laying stress upon the integrity and undividedness of the Absolute. His system is a monism with a pluralistic countenance".[1]

3

THE DVAITA (DUALISTIC) VEDĀNTA OF MADHVA

Describing the times in which Madhva lived, a contemporary writes: "The doctors of the dominant theology had grown turbulent and were proclaiming from the housetops that phenomena were unreal, that God is no Person and had no attributes, that souls were undifferentiated, and so forth. Several pious people had begun to feel dissatisfied with the prevalent theology and its influence on character. The shades of false theology had obscured the Sun of Truth."[2] Śaṅkara's theory of the world and the Absolute was the storm-centre of current controversy. Advaitism had been responsible for making the world an illusion and for reducing the Brahman into an impersonal principle. The forces of religion were ranged against the critical abstractions of philosophy. The Vishṇuites especially were chagrined because the ultimate sources of their own theology were also the fountain-head

[1] Sircar, *Comparative Studies*, p. 51.
[2] *The Three Great Acharyas*, Madras, 1924, pp. 233 ff.

of Śaṅkarite Advaitism. To the Vishṇuite, the Prasthānatraya (viz. the Upanishads, the Brahma Sūtras of Bādarāyaṇa and the Bhagavad Gītā) were as much authoritative as they were to the Advaitin. Both believed that Brahman was ultimately the "cause" of the world, that Brahman was the all-pervading, eternal *sat-cit-ānanda*. Both agreed that the Scriptures were the final authority, and that reasoning could be only accepted so long as it did not contradict revelation. Both of them, again, relegated "works" to a lower plane and considered that mystic apprehension of the Ultimate Reality was the more efficacious way of deliverance from saṁsāra. The Vishṇuite naturally felt that the Śaṅkarite interpretation of the Prasthānatraya could not also be right; and, therefore, it ought to be overthrown by such sound arguments as would vindicate the interpretation that the Vishṇuite religious position demanded. Religious devotion demanded a real world in which the individual jīva struggled for perfection; God is ultimately distinct from the world, now and always.

Rāmānuja had, indeed, vindicated this Vishṇuite point of view. His Viśishtādvaita had shown that the world of intelligent souls and non-intelligent matter is a modification (prakāra) of the Highest Self; there was a distinction between God and men; and there was justification to regard the world as real. Nimbārka had gone farther and worked out a theistic pluralism with a paradoxical monistic bias, contending that the world and God were simultaneously different and not-different from one another. Madhva now appears on the scene and carries the distinction still farther; far enough, in fact, to produce a complete dualism.

Of Madhva's life we know very little, because the enthusiasm of his disciples has made of it a series of miracles which strangely resemble those attributed to Jesus of Nazareth. He feeds his followers with loaves produced miraculously,[1] walks on water, stills the tempest, and finally "disappeared one day even as he sat teaching; but his followers now believe that he rejoined Vyāsa after having desired Padmanābha Thīrtha (a favourite disciple) to carry on the apostolic work".[2]

Madhva was a fervent protagonist of his dvaitism (dualism); travelling far and wide, he frequently engaged in violent controversy with rival teachers and advocates of other systems, particularly the Māyāvādins. He was also a copious writer. No less than thirty volumes are supposed to have been written by him. Perhaps the most famous of them is a compendium of contemporary schools of thought, the *Sarvadarśanasaṁgraha*, a fragment of which is available for us in the translation by Cowell and

[1] *The Three Great Acharyas*, pp. 247 ff.
[2] Carpenter, *Theism in Medieval India*, p. 408.

Gough.[1] Like the other Āchāryas of the Vedānta, Madhva also wrote commentaries on the Brahma Sūtras and the Bhagavad Gītā.

The system of Madhva is purely dualistic in character, insisting on the absolute and eternal difference between Brahman and the world. God, according to Madhva, is knowledge and bliss. He is independent of everything, and remains one in the midst of different forms. He is endowed with an infinite number of qualities. His chief functions are enumerated as eight altogether. He created, sustained, dissolved the world; he controlled all things in it; he imparted sacred knowledge; he became incarnate in many forms; and he delivered souls from the eternal round of saṁsāra.

The individual *jīvas*, Madhva held to be not only separate from the highest Self but also distinct from each other. They were innumerable, going through a round of births and deaths. Commenting on the Brahma Sūtra II, 3, 28, Madhva states that individual souls are *prithag-upadesāt*, literally "separate by (or, on account of) statement". And he goes on to add in his commentary on the sūtra following, "since the essence, i.e. the very nature of the soul, consists only of wisdom, bliss, and other qualities similar (in some degree) to those of Brahman there proceeds the statement that the soul is one with (like) Brahman; just as in the text, 'All this indeed is Brahman', Brahman is spoken of as identical with all (the world) on account of there being all the qualities in Brahman which are predicated of the whole world".[2]

None the less, there are essential differences between God and the individual soul. Madhva sets aside the authority of the Scriptures and arbitrarily interprets Upanishadic texts so as to bring them into harmony with his teachings. Thus "*tat tvam asi*" ("That art thou") should be "*tat tadīyah asi*" or "*tvam tasya asi*" ("Thou art his"). In the same way a passage like "brahmavid brahmāiva bhavati", "one who knows becomes Brahman itself", only means, according to Madhva, that in the condition of *Moksha*, the individual soul in question becomes similar to Brahman, being now free from misery. Such texts are to be understood in a metaphorical sense, as in "*purhito, yam rājā samvṛttah*", "this priest who has become a king". Moreover, it cannot be said that jīva and Brahman are different in *saṁsāra*, but become non-different after *moksha*; for what are different can never be non-different and vice versa. So Madhva concludes that "duality alone

[1] Cowell and Gough, *Translation of the Sarvadarśanasaṁgraha*, London, 1914 (Madhva's own system, *op. cit.*, pp. 87 ff.).

[2] Ghate, *Vedanta*, p. 32.

can be the truth, for we everywhere see nothing but pairs, or things in twos, e.g. knowledge and ignorance, merit and demerit, man and woman. So also Brahman and jīva, Brahman and Prakṛiti must be two entities and never identical with each other".[1]

The world is created from Prakṛiti, which is ever distinct from the Supreme Soul; it is related to the world only as its *causa efficiens* and not as the *causa materialis*. Here Madhva takes the position of the Sāṁkhya altogether, and argues that it is impossible to conceive of the non-intelligent world as being created from an intelligent Being.

While Madhva emphasizes the element of difference between these entities, yet he maintains the actuality of every element being subjected to God's will. Thus five sets of relations are formulated between them: (1) jīvas and Īśvara, (2) Īśvara and Prakṛiti, (3) between jīvas towards each other, (4) between jīvas and prakṛiti, (5) between prakṛiti to each other.

In the sense that Īśvara is thus "related" to the world He is not "absolute", and consequently not "unknowable, indescribable and destitute of qualities". Madhva contends that the very idea of the Absolute is relative to the idea of the "conditioned being". The Absolute is not absolutely unknowable. "The statement that Brahman is indescribable, etc., however, proceeds from the absence of thorough comprehension of Brahman. 'The wise see the form of (mount) Meru and still do not see it (for they cannot see all over, in and out). (Similarly) it (Brahman) cannot be described, reasoned out, and known (entirely as such and such).' So the Garuḍa Purāṇa says: 'For want of thorough comprehension, Brahman though known and inferred by reasoning, is said to be beyond the reach of words, reasoning and knowledge.' "[2]

Although we cannot conceive of His infinite Self, the Brahman is *not* impersonal. He is also personal, for He is not a mere lifeless abstraction, nor a formless mass of some substance. Commenting on Brahma Sūtra III, 3, 22, Madhva states that according to the Śruti, Brahman is not only the creator and destroyer; he is also the protector of the world. For, he claims that the following Sūtras (23–26) declare that the Brahman is by itself non-manifest and that it can become manifest. There does come about the realization, "prakāśa", of the Brahman; but only through the favour of the Brahman itself, of infinite and wonderful powers (*anantenaparita samarthyanānvitasya tasya prasādāt*) and not through the unaided efforts of the jīva. So the highest Brahman is the very same as Īśvara, unconditioned by the Māyā of Śaṅkara.

[1] Ghate, *Vedanta*, p. 35.
[2] Bhandarkar, *Vaisnavism, Saivism*, etc., p. 62.

To hold that Īśvara, by reason of his absoluteness and all-powerfulness, can exert influence upon finite intelligence (cit) and unconscious matter (acit) is not very helpful. In that case, as often as there is assertion of the independence of human jīvas and of prakṛiti (matter) so often the Absolute loses its character of absoluteness and is reduced to the category of finite existence. If the difference between Īśvara and the world, as separate entities, is granted, then Īśvara's absolute being is an impossibility. Logically, Madhva's system should lead to a pluralistic universe with a central monad controlling and binding all others into a system in some form of law yet to be discovered.

But Madhva tries to avoid such a pluralistic theism. He first establishes an integral existence of the Īśvara as the Ultimate Absolute which admits of viśesha (difference in its being). Viśesha denotes bedha (difference) in integrity and not identity in difference. Viśesha establishes difference where there is actually none, but it cannot create identity in difference. Such a mysterious capacity (śakti, power) Madhva attributes to God.

When Madhva undertook to provide Vishṇuism with a philosophy, he soon realized that the disputations of the doctors of the times centred in the problem of assimilating "the One" and "the many". The Scriptures had definitely stated that Brahman alone was real. So Śaṅkara denied the many and established the sole reality of the Brahman. Rāmānuja without denying the sole reality of Brahman had made the many predicates of the One. Madhva could not accept the solution of Śaṅkara because it denied reality to the world. Rāmānuja, by making the world the "body" of Īśvara, succeeded in giving the world a reality but at the expense of making the Absolute dependent, as it were, on itself: Madhva by creating "a rift in Brahman's own integrity".

Madhva, therefore, propounds his doctrine of viśesha or specific particulars. These infinite distinctions do not create differences in the absolute integrity of Brahman. If we claimed that there is no difference, then we would be denying the specific nature of the world of Becoming and that of Absolute Being. And, if we admitted that there was a difference, then we would be denying the absolute integrity of Being. So Madhva admits of "specific particulars" which admits of distinctions without destroying the absolute integrity of Brahman. In this way, *prakṛiti* and *jīva*, the world of men and of things, though separate from Īśvara, are subject to Him. Prakṛiti is real; it has existence only as dependent on Him; it is energized by Īśvara and subordinated to his will.

4

THE SUDDHĀDVAITA OF VALLABHA

According to Hindu orthodoxy, there are four *sampradāyas* (systems of religious teaching) of Vishṇuism. Along with Rāmānuja, Nimbārka and Madhva, the name of Vallabha is associated, as the fourth great āchārya of Vishṇuite theology. It was expected of every āchārya to publish commentaries on the [illegible] Brahma Sūtras and the Gītā (the prasthānatraya). [illegible] but he went further and openly adopted the Bhāgavata Purāṇa as an additional, equally valid authority for Vishṇuite tradition and piety.

Vallabha was probably born about A.D. 1479 and died at Benares *circa* A.D. 1530. The story of his life is surrounded by romance.[1] He was a Telugu Brahman by birth, born under very extraordinary circumstances, while his parents were on a pilgrimage to Benares. Although his father died while he was only eleven years old, the youthful Vallabha pursued his studies in the Vedas and eventually began to teach the Vedānta. We hear of him disputing with the pandits at the court of Vijayanagar and being chosen by the king as his spiritual guide, because he proved so efficient in disputation.[2]

The doctrine of Vallabha is called Suddhādvaita (pure non-dualism). The non-duality of Brahman is affirmed as being pure and free from Māyā. Jīvas and the world of matter are essentially the same as Brahman without any intermediation of Māyā śakti.[3] Śaṅkara had made use of the idea of Māyā as an inexplicable śakti which created the world without conditioning the absoluteness of the *parabrahman*. Vallabha declared that there was no need to separate the Absolute Brahman and Īśvara. Brahman himself created the world. So Vallabha boldly announced; and, in view of the identity of cause and effect (satkāryavāda), he thus placed beyond cavil the reality of the world; for Brahman's creation necessarily shared its Creator's reality.

The individual jīva is also non-different from Brahman; though atomic in size, virtually, it is part of Brahman. Commenting on Brahma Sūtra II, 3, 19–28,[4] Vallabha claims that the *jīva* though *aṇu* is designated as Brahman because the qualities of Brahman form the essence of jīva, consequently distinguishing it from the

[1] Cf. Carpenter, p. 434, also Monier Williams, p. 14.

[2] C. Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, London, 1921, ii, p. 249.

[3] Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣnavism*, etc., p. 78. "The relation between the two (Brahman and Ātman) is that of identity, both being in the pristine unchanged form."

[4] Ghate, *Vedānta*, p. 96.

inanimate world. But, though atomic in size, jīva can pervade the whole body by virtue of its quality of intelligence (*caitanya*), just as sandal-wood can, by its fragrance, make itself known even where it does not exist.

Vallabha divides jīvas into three kinds. Some are *suddha*, pure, when their essential qualities are not obscured by Avidyā, ignorance. Others are *saṁsārin*, when they are in the bondage of Avidyā and subject to birth and death, connected as they are with subtle and gross forms of prakṛiti. Yet others, again, are called *mukta*. Such a jīva is freed through vidyā from bondage, the bondage of saṁsāra.

The inorganic world, *prapañca*, is also in essence Brahman (brahmātm[illegible]), [illegible] the guṇas, qualities, of caitanya, intelligence, [illegible] obscured by one quality of sattva, existence. Matter is not only created by Brahman (Brahma-kārya), but is really Brahman itself manifested in gross form. The world is therefore as eternal and real as the Brahman itself, its creation and destruction being due to the śakti of Brahman. This māyā śakti of Brahman is, however, neither illusory nor essentially different from Brahman.[1]

The world is real; it is only our experience (pratiti) of it which is erroneous. We fail to see that the world is but a form of Brahman. When a man sitting in a boat that is moving up-stream looks at the trees on the banks, he seems to feel that they are moving while he is stationary. In the same way, the world which has objectivity for us, but which is essentially of the nature of Brahman, and so purely subjective, is real in form; but the objectivity with which the jīva endows the world is unreal. It is projected by Avidyā (ignorance). Thus, this world, which is indeed real, appears in three different forms to three different kinds of persons. To those who have become Brahman the world appears as Brahman, pure and whole. To those who have studied the sastras the world appears as both Brahman and Māyā; but they are able to discriminate between the abiding Brahma-element and the unreal Māyā factor in external phenomena. Vallabha compares this group of people to adults wearing green glasses: although they see things green through them, they know that the world-greenness is only accidental. Finally, there are those to whom the Brahma-Māyā world is altogether real. These are like children wearing green glasses: they see things green and accept them to be all green. They are naïvely realistic.

If we were to ask Vallabha what was the relation between the

[1] *Anubhāshya*, I, i, 4. "Brahman is the efficient and the material cause of the universe. He is not only the creator of the universe, but is the universe itself."

Brahman, the jīvas and the prapañca, he would say, "ultimate identity". He puts an almost literal interpretation on such expressions as *tat tvam asi, sarvam idam Brahman,* etc. Unlike Rāmānuja and Nimbārka, Vallabha claims that what is true in the world-God relationship is the fact of its non-difference (abheda). Vallabha's cosmology has, therefore, a greater inwardness than Rāmānuja's; he does not regard any other effort than of self-expression on the part of Brahman in the creation of the world. From Śaṅkara, he differs in accepting the dynamic conception of spirit and experience; from Rāmānuja, in rejecting the secondary fact of an inert prakṛiti in addition to the supreme, self-conscious, dynamic reality of Brahman.

5

A COMPARATIVE STATEMENT OF THE MĀYĀ DOCTRINE IN VEDĀNTISM

In the scholastic period we have reviewed in this chapter, every āchārya deals with the problem of *relating* the Supernatural and the Natural, God and the world of men, the Absolute and phenomenal experience. They are not enunciating a *weltanschauung* as such: they are concerned with the world only in as far as it is connected with the Ultimate. Nor do they approach the problem in the disinterested "philosophic" attitude of a seeker after truth: they are primarily interested in establishing the religious fact of salvation, *Moksha.* This religious experience presupposes that man, when released from saṁsāra, attains a perfection that he did not possess on earth.

All the āchāryas, with the exception of Madhva, are completely bound by the authoritative dicta of the Scriptures. So they start with the assumption that ultimately there is but Brahman alone; that Brahman is both "personal" and absolute; that since Brahman is the [illegible] real is Brahman. The Upanishads state [illegible] Brahman; and so, ultimately, real and identical with Brahman. But common-sense experience and religious consciousness indicate that, however valid that identity may be metaphysically, such identity cannot be actual in every-day life.

The scholiast could not question the reality of Brahman, for that is given: he could not doubt the reality of the individual self which also is the same as the Brahman; then, why does it not perceive its identity? The issue is brought down to the question of the reality or the unreality of sense-experience of individual

jīvas in relation to the absolute reality of the Brahman. How is the realm of the natural related to the Supernatural; how is many to be regarded in connection with the One; how can the actual experience of the world be interpreted in the light of the mystic realization of identity-consciousness with Brahman; how can the pragmatic actuality of the dynamic world of Becoming be reconciled with the sole reality of absolute Being? This was the complex question which confronted these thinkers; not the problem of dispassionately discovering the nature of the World.

In answering this question, the āchārya had to fulfil three conditions: he had to abide by the final authority of the Scriptures; he had to safeguard the validity of religious experience; and he had to vindicate the ultimate unity of Being. The Upanishads themselves were by no means clear in defining the nature of Brahman, and the nature of the "identity" of the human self with the Absolute. The texts proclaim that the Brahman is the sole ultimate reality, the "cause" of the world, the ultimate Object of mystic realization as *sat* (pure Being), *cit* (Intelligence), *ānanda* (bliss). But the texts lend themselves to various interpretations.

Śaṅkara cuts the Gordian knot by drawing a hard-and-fast distinction between Reality that is transcendental and Reality that is phenomenal. A complete analysis of being, he holds, would present three phases: transcenden[illegible] empirical (vyavahārika) and purely illusory [illegible] s of being. Śaṅkara admits that empirical existences are wholly facts of finite consciousness; for we cannot deny them. But does that mean that they are also metaphysically valid? Śaṅkara thinks not. Even in finite consciousness, all empirical data have degrees of reality; they are conditioned by sense-categories and temporal localizations. They may have a derivative existence which is of the nature of partial being and partial non-being. Being is abiding and persisting; a *continuum* and a *plenum*. Therefore, empirical experiences of partial being, not possessing the character of Being, are only "appearances" reflected in finite consciousness. As long as sense-categories function, and subject-object relations prevail, the Absolute cannot be a datum in the experience of finite consciousness. On this Śaṅkara is definite. The Absolute is unchanged and unchangeable; it transcends all relational concepts; its static perfection is of the nature of pure consciousness; therefore, the Absolute Brahman is altogether inaccessible to finite consciousness in the here and now.

Śaṅkara, thus, draws an absolute distinction between the Supernatural and the Natural, the One and the Many, the Absolute and the relative. And he bases his whole system of Advaitism on

the doctrine of the sole reality of the former and the illusory nature of the latter. From the standpoint of the Absolute Being the world is merely an "appearance", although it might have pragmatic validity; in fact, he would say, it has.

The world as an appearance is the creation of Avidyā, and so ultimately not of the same "stuff" as the Absolute. Avidyā and finite consciousness are inter-dependent: Avidyā is a fact to finite experience, not to the Absolute. From the standpoint of Reality there are then no two orders of knowledge (vidyā and avidyā); nor two planes of existence (paramārthika and vyavahārika). Being alone is real. Becoming in Śaṅkara's metaphysics is categorically denied.

Though Śaṅkara denies the many; still he would not make it a *complete* negation altogether. Experience has an existence although it might be an appearance. However indirectly, the phenomenal has to be related to the transcendental. The world appearance needs an explanation to finite consciousness. Śaṅkara maintains that we cannot solve the problem of the relation between the transcendental Absolute and the phenomenal appearance. This is the ultimate implication of the doctrine of Māyā. It is a mystery (Māyā).

From the standpoint of the Vishṇuite thinkers, Śaṅkara's solution of the problem of Being and Becoming is a religious outrage. If at no point in finite consciousness God is actually experienced because the realm of the phenomenal is illusory; and if God is so far removed, as an Absolute unrelated to the world, religious relationship is impossible and invalid. Rāmānuja, therefore, would not admit that the world is illusory; much less from the standpoint of Being. God does express Himself in this world of Becoming, though it is different and yet not different from Him. The Vishṇuite thinkers, therefore, posit the independent reality of finite selves (jīva) and nature (prakṛiti); but at the same time they endeavour to retain all ultimate unity in Brahman. But how could they maintain the "absoluteness" of the Brahman at the same time? Rāmānuja suggests that the world of men and matter is "attributes", that jīva and prakṛiti are predicates of the Absolute. He pointed to the relationship between the human self and the body by which it was not ultimately affected, as analogous to the relationship between God and the world. The Śaṅkarites were not slow to see the defect in such an analogy. How could we conceive of changes in prakṛiti being confined to it and not as, in any way, affecting the unity of Brahman's Being, they pointedly asked.

Perceiving this discrepancy in Rāmānuja's viśishṭādvaita, one of his followers, Jīva Gosvāmi, had suggested that Māyā-

prakṛiti, the world of Becoming, was only a *bahiranga* śakti, an "outer" factor which did not touch the core of Brahman's Being. Then, the connection of Brahman with the world of matter is only indirect; his essential absoluteness is not sullied. Still, the difficulty remains.

Positing the independent reality of the jīvas had one more difficulty. Finite consciousness is described by Vishṇuite Vedāntins as related to Brahman on the one hand and to prakṛiti on the other, for they all recognize these three entities: Brahman, cit and acit. Such a dual relationship would imply one of two things: either the jīva is not pure consciousness or it is limited by some factor that blinds it to its real nature. But the Upanishads definitely state that the Ātman (self) is the same as the Brahman. Therefore it must be assumed that the jīva is indeed pure consciousness. What, then, differentiates the self and the world, as they are now, from the ultimately real Brahman? And, what is the nature of the differentiating factor?

So all the Vishṇuite āchāryas posit Avidyā. That is an assumption which might prove satisfactory as religious explanation, but is difficult to maintain as a metaphysical category. If jīva is pure consciousness, it is hard to conceive of its being under the influence of an extraneous factor which can effectively limit it. Much more difficult is it to assume that Avidyā could be subordinated to Brahman's pure Being, for ultimately all Vishṇuite thought aims at the unity of Brahman's Being alone. The mystery-element of Māyā still abides. For the pragmatic, religious necessity of bheda (difference) has been claimed, but not explained in the light of the metaphysical reality of the a-bheda (non-difference), between Īśvara and jīva; and between jīva and prakṛiti.

Madhva dispenses with the notion of difference and non-difference and substitutes the idea of "specific particulars" (viśesha). These specific particulars are infinite in number and inhere in things, eternal and non-eternal. Viśesha is of the nature of being (bhava, and so positive) as well as not-being (abhava, and so negative). It is a śakti, like Śaṇkara's Māyā, and equally indeterminate and mysterious. If it has existence it cannot be different from Brahman; for then it would disintegrate the absoluteness of Brahman. But what of it, asks Madhva: and proceeds boldly to delineate a clear-cut distinction between the world and God. In so doing Madhva is quite arbitrary in his interpretation of the Scriptures; he breaks away from their traditional authority. According to him, the world of men and matter, in the final analysis, is like Brahman, but not Brahman itself. Ultimately the One and the Many, Being and Becoming, are both real because in the very nature of reality there are "specific particulars",

viśeshas, that distinguish one from the other but do not establish any differentiation.

Vallabha holds that Madhva had gone too far in positing this dualism between God and the world. It was clearly against the teachings of the Scriptures. He, therefore, contends that the creative manifold is really Brahman. The Many that we see is due to avidya which sets up a distorted view of the real one. Māyā explains the Many in relation to the One. According to him, Māyā first conceals the nature of the real, and then creates a false impression of it on man's mind. Māyā does give us knowledge (epistemologically and not in its cosmic, creative aspect) of the real but not in its true perspective. It fails to represent the essential undivided nature of things in the integrity of the absolute Being. Vallabha does not admit the creative aspect of Māyā. To him, it has only an epistemological significance, in that it presents phenomena isolated and concrete, concealing the identity of their being in the Absolute. But Vallabha believes that such identity does not obscure the individual nature and being of phenomena, although without reference to the absolute Being they have no clear meaning to religious consciousness.

To the Śaṅkarites, on the other hand, the epistemological functioning of Māyā is only of pragmatic significance. Some of them have gone the whole length of taking the position of subjective idealists and deny the world of appearance any sort of validity. The world-appearance is to them a subjective projection of avidya, in itself nothing real. If it creates, even as its creation, it is itself an illusion.

According to the Vishṇuites, Māyā is the creative principle which is associated with Īśvara, the Supreme Self, as his Śakti. Māyā is prakṛiti, according to Rāmānuja. It is the mysterious creative capacity of the Parama Purusha through which He can realize His will and purpose. It is called Māyā because it possesses capacity to produce the "wonders" of the world: it is Avidyā, as it is opposed to the knowledge of Brahman. The Rāmānujites go further and actually equate Māyā with prakṛiti, and claim that it has sattva, rajas and tamas for its constituents. It is eternal, but completely subject to Īśvara's will.

The school of Vallabha makes a distinction between Māyā and Avidyā. To followers of Vallabha, Māyā is the śakti of Īśvara, by which He creates the world of men and matter out of mere spontaneity of delight (līlā, sport). This Māyā śakti of Īśvara has two aspects: avirbhava (spreading out) and tirobhava (withdrawing to itself). It makes things appear and disappear from our vision. This power is inherent in Īśvara himself. But the way it functions is obscured from our vision by Avidyā.

From the standpoint of all Vishṇuite writers, Māyā is the *causa materia* and Īśvara the *causa efficiens*. Rāmānuja emphasizes the identity of the material and the efficient cause because the material cause has no independent existence of its own. Jīva Gosvāmi and Valladeva, as we pointed out already, characterize Māyā as the "outer-force" of Īśvara, because Māyā has no direct touch with Īśvara, although it is He that energizes it. Madhva avoids this difficulty by denying the identity of *causa materia* and *causa efficiens*. He keeps them separate. But Prakṛiti is subject to Īśvara. As [illegible] an independent existence, but it is energized by [illegible], on the other hand, accepts the identity of the efficient and material causes. Māyā, to him, is the śakti of Brahman; Brahman's will to be many is the origin; all creation is the expression of His being.

Whatever may be the relation between the two causes, identity or difference, the retention of Māyā or prakṛiti as a second substance raises a metaphysical difficulty of great moment. Even if it is contended that Māyā transforms matter according to Īśvara's will, the intractableness of matter has the potentiality of offering a resistance to conscious energizing. Rāmānuja's solution is really of no help, for māyā has an inertness which makes it a substance opposed to Īśvara. Though the independent existence of Māyā is metaphysically denied the dualism still remains.

Śāṅkara realizes the difficulty of assimilating an inert prakṛiti with the Absolute; that is why he characterizes Māyā as a śakti of Īśvara, the empirical Being, not of Brahman. Consequently Māyā is conditioned by its "sat-asat" nature. No definite conception can be formed of it as it is both real and unreal, different from reality and at the same time from complete unreality. All the Śaṅkarites categorically accept such a position. The Absolute-identity-nature of the ultimate is thus not in the least affected by the empiric order of change. In finite consciousness Māyā appears to be located in Brahman, but it is not related to Brahman because Brahman is absolute and impersonal. Nevertheless, Māyā has an influence upon individual jīva; but then, Jīva is only a reflection of Brahman in the Avidyā state.

CHAPTER VIII

THE DOCTRINE OF MĀYĀ AND LATER VAISHṆAVITE BHAKTI CULTS

I

From the thirteenth to the seventeenth century there was a great spiritual awakening in India which spread from one province to another of almost the entire country. This religious reformation, as at no other time in Hindu religious history, moved more nearly towards a genuine theism. The original impulse to this movement is aptly expressed by Tulsi Dās, one of the greatest spirits of this age, in this emphatic protest: "The worship of the impersonal laid no hold of my heart."[1] By stressing the message of a God of grace the reformers of this period sought to place above jñāna and karma the worship of the devout and loving heart (bhakti) as the highest religious good. One of the chief marks of this movement in consequence, was its sense of the relation of religion to the conduct of life.[2]

The first of this long line of bhaktās arose in Maharāshtra, the modern Bombay Presidency, in the person of Jñāneśvara. He belonged to the great succession of the Nāthas. In a previous age in Maharāshtra, like the Āḷwars in the Tamil country, the Nāthas had attempted to establish and popularize Bhakti religion in which some avatār or other of Vishṇu was regarded as the object of religious devotion. The writings of these Marāṭha saints consist of a series of short poems called *abhangs*. We should not look in them for an articulated system; the abhangs are not dogmatic treatises. The abhangs are unsystematic utterances, so common in Hindu devotional literature, representative of various moods, at times pronouncedly speculative, at other times decidedly mystical; but at no time clearly expository. Their bhakti is rooted in the intense feeling of the ecstatic moment; it does not persist long enough in any one mood which may be subject to analysis and exposition.

Some modern Hindu interpreters are inclined to hold that the Marāṭha saints represent different types of mysticism. "Jñāneśvara is the type of an intellectual mystic; Nāmadeva heralds the democratic age; Ekanātha synthesizes the claims of worldly and spiritual life; Tukārāma's mysticism is most personal; while Rāmadāsa is the type of an active saint. . . . Between themselves,

[1] *The Rāmāyana of Tulsi Dās*, Bk. VII, p. 107, Growse's translation.

[2] N. Macnicol, *Indian Theism*, Oxford University Press, 1915, pp. 107 ff.

these great mystics of Maharāshtra have produced a literature, which shall continue to be the wonder of all humanity, which cares at all for an expression of mystical thought in any country."[1] This is only another way of saying that we cannot find in the abhangs of these saints any clear-cut system of religious thought.

Because there exist two different traditions in regard to Jñāneśvara's date, there is some difficulty in fixing the exact period in which he lived. But there seems to be general agreement that his famous work, the Jñāneśvari, was written in A.D. 1290 (śāka 1212). He was also the author of the Amṛitānubhava, which is regarded as more of the nature of a philosophic treatise.

The Jñāneśvari is really a free paraphrase in Marāthi verse of the Bhagavad Gītā. The seven hundred slokas of the Gītā are here rendered into ten thousand verses. It is not surprising that this poem is considered the most important work in all Marāthi literature. The Jñāneśvari has exercised a unique influence both upon the thought and upon the language of Maharāshṭra. How far and wide the influence of its teaching upon the common folk can be realized from this fact.

In the Jñāneśvari, the world of experience is likened to the Asvattha Tree, the Tree of Existence, which has its root upwards in absolute Existence, and grows downwards. So that "what is behind it is before it; what is before it is behind it; which itself unseen, sees without there being any object to be seen . . . which is knowledge without being either knower or known . . . which is neither product nor cause".[2]

The mysterious power which makes possible this strange offshoot of Reality is what Jñāneśvar calls māyā. To him māyā signifies non-existence. For really speaking the Tree of Existence has neither come into being, nor does it exist, nor has it really an end. It is like a mirage which appears but does not exist. It is like a rainbow which appears to be of many colours, but in which the colours do not really exist.

This tree, Jñāneśvar indicates, is to be cut down only by Knowledge. "To know that it is unreal is to be able to destroy it altogether. A child may be frightened by a pseudo-demon; but does the demon exist for the matter of it? Can one really throw down the castle in the air? Is it possible to break the horn of a hare? Can we pluck the flowers in the skies? The tree itself is unreal; why then should we trouble about rooting it up? . . . The tree itself is unreal, and to know that it is unreal is sufficient to destroy it."[3]

And yet, all this, the universe of becoming, is "due to My order. The Vedas speak, when I make them speak; the sun moves, when

[1] R. D. Ranade, *History of Indian Philosophy*, Poona, 1933, vol. vii, p. 20 ff. [2] *Jñāneśvari*, XV, 72 ff. [3] *Ibid.*, XV, 215 ff.

I make him move; the *prāna* inhales and exhales only when I communicate motion to it; it is I, who moves the World. It is on account of my order that death envelopes all. All these forces of nature are merely my bondsmen. All the names and forms that we see in the world are due to me."[1]

In the Amṛitānubhva, however, the metaphysical speculations of Jñāneśvar show distinct traces of the influence of the Sāṅkhya system. The world is here attributed to the interaction of Purusha and Prakṛiti, which are also designated by Jñāneśvar as Śiva and Śakti, worshipped as God and Goddess. The relation between them is likened to that existing between man and wife. This surely indicates the influence of Śaivism on the one hand, and that of the dualistic trend of thought of the Sāṅkhya on the other. Prakṛiti is stated to be only "the desire of the Purusha to enjoy himself".[2] The Amritānubhava contends "that both the ideas of Prakṛiti and Purusha are interdependent; they are but different forms of one living intelligent Brahman. This synthesis of the two principles Purusha and Prakṛiti is clearly due to the influence of the Vedānta on the thought of Jñāneśvari."[3]

In the seventh chapter of the Amṛitānubhava, Jñāneśvar deals with his theory of the World. He considers the world as in no way different from the Brahman, but as a "manifestation" of Him. For nothing exists but Brahman. But though Brahman itself becomes the visible world, his unity is not in the least disturbed by the manifold of the world's changing forms. Since the Brahman alone exists in all things, Jñāneśvar asks, how could there be any seeing and not-seeing which imply duality? The seeing and the not-seeing which are relative and dependent on the absolute Brahman thus destroy each other. The Self is not proved to be false even when he is not manifested by māyā, but remains what he is, as the face continues to exist whether it is reflected in a mirror or not. On the other hand, māyā owes its reality to the Self, as a lamp which is lighted by a person proves the existence of the person. Or again, as light may come from a jewel, so the world comes from God, and the world is to the same extent real as the light is.

From the foregoing illustrations and paraphrases cited from Jñāneśvar's writings it is clear that his mind is oscillating between the two attitudes towards the world of sense-experience which may be described as "world-affirmation" and "world-negation". The devotee is convinced that the Lord alone is, and it is because of Him everything else has value. But the value possessed by everything other than God is derived and, therefore, of com-

[1] *Jñāneśvari*, IX, 281 ff. [2] *Amṛitānubhava*, I, 2.
[3] Ranade, *History of Indian Philosophy*, vol. vii, p. 143.

paratively less or of no significance, in relation to the source of all value, which is God Himself.

Jñāneśvar is forced to admit that if the religious relationship between the Bhakta (devotee) and the Bhagavan (Lord) is to be valid and worthy of singleminded pursuit in this life, the world of human experience has to be given due recognition. More so, because the process of Nature is finally to be traced to the direction of the Divine Mind. And yet to admit the world as real is to concede that there is something else other than God which is also real. So he seeks through many figures of speech to affirm and to negate the world at the same time. He is anxious to preserve both the oneness and the manyness of experience, reconciling both Monism and Pluralism. Jñāneśvar is no systematic philosopher. His main object as a religious reformer is to point out unmistakably the unreality of existence in this mortal world, and to call people back to the spiritual life which alone is of abiding and eternal value.

The general opinion of modern Hindu commentators is that to Jñāneśvar the doctrine of māyā has no [illegible] significance, but purely an "ethical and mystical" [illegible] Marātha saint is concerned chiefly with impressing on men that life in this world, with all its many and varied experiences, should not be taken to be the ultimate good. A discerning man should, therefore, so order his life in all his relationships with his fellows that he sees behind and through life to the greatest good, which is God Himself. The purpose of life is to direct all activity in the knowledge of God alone, as being the source and end of all that was, is and shall be. It is further implied that when the Bhakta reaches to this goal; when the devotee realizes God as the sole end of being, life becomes of no significance. The world is proved to be false, in this sense.

2

The next in succession is Nāmdev who also wrote many devotional *abhangs* dedicated to Viṭhobā, the god of Pandharpur. Another name of Viṭhobā is Viṭṭhal, a corruption of Vishṇu. According to legendary accounts, he is Krishṇa turning back again from Rādha to his wedded wife Rukmini.

A younger contemporary of Jñāneśvara, Nāmdev, is said to have been born in the year 1270. He was by caste a tailor, but that did not prevent him becoming the friend and associate of the Brahman author of the Jñāneśvari. Tradition has it that Nāmdev passed through a definite conversion experience; it turned him

[1] Ranade, *History of Indian Philosophy*, vol. vii, p. 178.

from a robber to a seeker for salvation, having been convicted of a sense of sin by the lamentations of an unhappy widow, whose husband had been murdered by the band to which Nāmdev belonged. This had driven him to "make a friend of repentance". A vision bade him go to Pandharpur, so the story goes; he was told that "its patron god Viṭṭhal will purge thee of thy sins and thou shalt not only obtain salvation, but renown as one of the god's saints".[1]

The chief religious interest in Nāmdev's life lies in a remarkable change or development in his thought. This is revealed in his *abhangs*. At first he is the purely emotional type; the sole object of his fervid devotion is Viṭhobā, from the precints of whose temple he can scarcely tear himself away. But at a later period Viṭhobā has become for him only a symbol of the supreme Soul that pervades the universe. An attitude of spiritual indifference to all things of the world, he now regards in his spiritual pilgrimages as his supreme attainment. Nāmdev's faith, henceforth, rests upon a philosophical interpretation of the universe. He reports a perfect control over the sensations which formerly harassed him; it brings him, if not peace, at least passivity.

Nāmdev is emphatic in his belief about the sole reality of God. In one of his lyrics which has been incorporated into the Sikh Grantha-Sahib, he says: "He[2] (God) is one, (but) fills and encompasses many; wherever you look you find him there. There is scarcely one who understands him, all being deluded by the variegated picture drawn by Māyā (delusive power). Everything is Govinda, everything is Govinda, there is nothing without Govinda. Just as there is one thread and on it are woven breadthwise and lengthwise hundreds of thousands of beads, so is everything woven in the Lord. The waves, the foam, and the bubbles of water are not different from water. All this extent of the universe is the sport of Parabrahma and is not different from him. Illusive phantoms and the objects seen in dreams are regarded as real. When by the instruction of my Guru my mind awoke, I accepted the truth. Reflecting in my mind, I see this all to be the creation of Hari, says Nāmdev; in the inside of every individual thing there is one Murāri alone without any interstice."

In another *abhang* Nāmdev states that the saint is one who sees Vāsudeva in everything. The rest of the world of men are, however, entangled in the shackles of delusion. To the saint all wealth is like earth and the nine species of gems are mere stones. For he has driven out of his heart desire and anger and instead cherishes

[1] Cf. Macnicol, *Indian Theism*, p. 122.

[2] Translated by R. G. Bhandarkar in his *Vaishnavism, Saivism*, etc., Strassburg, 1913, p. 91.

peace and forgiveness, and he keeps constantly repeating to himself the name of Govinda.

This persistent emphasis which we find in most of the *abhangs* of Nāmdev on the saving efficacy of repeating the name of God is by no means peculiar to this Marātha saint. Though, of all these bhaktas of Maharāshtra, Nāmdev's insistence upon the name is perhaps the strongest. The name of God, according to him, is the Form of God and the Form of God is His Name. God may remain concealed; but He cannot conceal His Name. When we have once uttered His Name, He cannot escape from us.[1]

Besides, in the thought of Nāmdev, the idea persists that God is the mysterious substratum of the universe of man's everyday experiences. In all these passing changes of life He alone abides. We never know Him, for He is concealed from us. Man should, therefore, cultivate an attitude of mistrust of the world, by constantly reminding himself of the sole reality of God. This is best done by incessantly repeating to himself the Name. Such an idea led to the belief that there is a peculiar potency in the very name of God. For it had the power of dispelling, from the mind of the bhakta, the evanescent charms cast by the delusive power of the world's unreal experiences.

3

Ekanātha (A.D. 1533–1599) was a voluminous writer. But for our purpose the most valuable of his writings are his classical commentary on the eleventh chapter of the Bhāgavata and his abhangs, both of which present his philosophical and mystical doctrines in telling language. Ekanātha was not merely a saint, but also a poet of a very high order, a fact which has contributed no little to his deserving popularity as a great teacher of religion.[2]

Ekanātha's theory of the world is based on a spiritualistic monism. He says: "Before its manifestation the world was not. After its disappearance it will not leave even a trace of its existence behind it. What therefore manifests itself during the middle state of existence is unreal, and manifests itself through the power of māyā. The beginning of this world is *parabrahman*, which also survives the destruction of the world. Naturally, even in the state of existence, when the world appears to possess a concrete exis-

[1] Namdev's *abhangs* 64 and 66, cf. R. D. Ranade, *Four Source-Books of Maharashtra Mysticism*, Poona, 1927.

[2] Cf. Patwardhan, W. B. Wilson *Philological Lectures*, Fergusson College Magazine, vol. viii, Nos. 3 and 4, Poona, 1917.

tence, what really exists is not the world but Brahman. Only to the indiscriminating this illusory show appears as real."[1]

Ekanātha adduces four arguments to prove the unreality of the world. In the first place the Scriptures declare that Brahman alone is real, and that it is one without a second. Secondly, the transiency of life on earth is sufficient vindication of the impermanence of all empirical experience. The third argument is what may be called the historical proof, the testimony of venerated saints like Mārkaṇḍeya and Bhāsuṇḍi who had themselves witnessed for millions of times the whole world being reduced to ashes at the end of each cycle. The fourth proof of Ekanātha is best stated in his own words: "A rope is a rope at all times. But through misconception it is understood variously as a log of wood, a serpent, a garland of pearls, or a line of water-flow. Similarly, Brahman is existence itself, knowledge itself. But various mysterious theories discuss it as a mere void, or as being qualified. They range from pure nihilism to pluralism of an extreme type. Thus the fact that a variety of theories exists clearly shows that this world-experience is false."[2]

Ekanātha is, therefore, more pronouncedly Vedāntic than the other Marātha bhaktas, in that he follows more closely the philosophic position of Śaṅkara. He believes that the existence of plurality is best explained in terms of a principle which will partake of both unity and plurality, and "which without tampering in any way with the purity of the One, will yet be the parent of the Many". Vidyā, according to Ekanātha, is the spiritual experience one has at the time of real knowledge. It expresses itself in the consciousness "I am Brahman". This experience destroys avidyā.

"The belief that one is sinful and ever unfortunate", writes Ekanātha in his commentary on the Bhāgavata,[3] "is the clear expression of avidyā, the mother of all doubts and miseries. Avidyā enchains the individual self. Vidyā delivers him from bondage. But these two are eternal powers of Māyā, a great enchantress who is a perpetual enigma to men. She is a riddle because she cannot be proved to be real or unreal. She cannot be proved to be real, because she vanishes with the first ray of spiritual knowledge. And she cannot be proved to be unreal inasmuch as everyone feels her presence and power day and night. She has therefore been called the 'indescribable', neither real nor unreal. It is she who breeds and brings up under her fostering care the two powers, namely, Vidhyā and Avidyā. But

[1] Ekanātha, *Commentary on the Bhāgavata*, Nirnaysāgar Press, Poona, 1909, xix, pp. 87 ff.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 197 ff.

[3] *Ibid.*, xi, pp. 102 ff.

if one were to come closer and look at her carefully, it will be seen that this Enchantress is no other than the finite self's own idea."

The greatest contribution that Ekanātha, more than all the Marātha saints, made to the religious life of the times, consisted in a popularization of the Vedānta "accomplished to an extent which was never known before".[1] It is significant that the religious revival of this period which laid stress upon a Bhakti mysticism and which was centred in devout adoration of Vishṇu should have been responsible, at the same time, for the dissemination of the principles of the Vedānta. The abhangs of Ekanātha, as well as his treatise on the Bhāgavata were written in such simple and attractive style that their teachings could be appreciated by the popular mind. So much so, it is commonly held in modern Maharāshtra, that it was principally Ekanātha who made the ideas of the Vedānta familiar to the man in the street.

This, as we shall see, has had tremendous consequences. The "mystery" of the world of creation which had nothing essentially stable about it; the essentially unknowable nature of God; the unreliability of all sense-experiences were among many ideas that were coming henceforth to hold a place of importance in the religious creed of the common man.

4

Of all this line of saints in Maharāshtra, the greatest in the popular estimation is Tukārām. He was a contemporary of the great Sivājī, and just as that great warrior-chief bound together the people of Maharāshtra into a nation, this religious reformer drew together all classes of the community by means of a common religious enthusiasm. His period is generally fixed between A.D. 1608 and 1649.[2]

To him are attributed over five thousand abhangs, of rare poetic charm and deep religious fervour. It is not impossible that some at least of the lyrics attributed to Tukārām are probably forgeries. We cannot always be sure which abhangs attributed to Tukārām represent his real theological position. Added to this is the inherent inconsistency of thought and expression which is a characteristic feature of the work of all these poet-saints; all of them are far from being logical or systematic thinkers. But on the whole, there is reason to hold that there is a noticeable development in Tukārām's religious experience from the tradi-

[1] Ranade, *History of Indian Philosophy*, vol. vii, p. 257.

[2] Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣnavism*, etc., p. 93; cf. Macnicol, *Psalms of the Maratha Saints*, Association Press, Calcutta, 1919, p. 20.

tional Brahman doctrine to something more inward and personal.

The contemplation of the impersonal Absolute has no appeal to Tukārām. The warmth of his religious devotion needed a concrete object for worship; this he found in Viṭhobā of Pandhari. In most of the abhangs there are passionate expressions of eager longing to visit the temple of Pandhari and to experience the blessedness of the immediate presence of Viṭhobā. The following hymn[1] beautifully rendered into English by Nicol Macnicol is one of many in which Tukārām has poured out his soul's deepest yearning to wait on his adored deity.

With head on hand before my door,
I sit and wait in vain.
Along the road to Pandhari
My heart and eyes I strain.

When shall I look upon my Lord?
When shall I see him come?
Of all the passing days and hours
I count the heavy sum.

With watching long my eyelids throb,
My limbs with sore distress,
But my impatient heart forgets
My body's weariness.

Sleep is no longer sweet to me;
I care not for my bed;
Forgotten are my house and home,
All thirst and hunger fled.

Says Tukā, Blest shall be the day—
Ah, soon may it betide!
When one shall come from Paṇḍhari
To summon back the bride.

There is a distinctive theistic strain in Tukārām's theology. He would not allow God to be "formless". "Be formless as others desire," he sings, "but for me take thou on a form, O God."[2] Consequently, Tukārām boldly declares that he prefers "the bliss of duality" to the philosophical doctrine of non-duality (advaita). He says[3]:

Advaita contents me not, but dear to me
The service of thy feet.
O grant me this reward! To sing of thee
To me how sweet!

[1] Macnicol, *Psalms of the Maratha Saints*, p. 59.
[2] Tukārām's *abhang*, 2410, edited by Vishnubava Jog, Poona, 1927.
[3] *Ibid.*, 3753, Induprakash edition, Bombay, 1869–73.

Setting us twain, lover and Lord, apart,
This joy to me display.
Grant it to Tukā—Lord of all thou art—
Some day, some day.

This idea is repeated often. The saint emphatically declares that he would not want to believe that the individual is absorbed into the ultimate self on being "liberated". So much so that he begs rather to be permitted to be born again and again, if need be, on earth. If only he could constantly sing the praises of God, and if he could always live in the company of the good, then he would not mind the endless misery involved in continued re-incarnation.[1]

But there are several other, and equally significant lyrics which are admittedly of his authorship, where Tukārām takes an attitude which is monistic. In these abhangs he maintains the ultimate identity of the personal God of religion and the impersonal Absolute of the philosopher. "The form of God, which stands before us with His hands on His waist, is the same as that impersonal Existence which envelops all, which has neither form nor name . . . which has neither end, nor colour, nor standing place; which has no family nor caste, neither possesses hands nor feet. The Impersonal shines forth as the Person by the power of devotion, says Tukā."[2] In the final analysis, the nature of the Ultimate is beyond human ken. Indeed, in one significant lyric[3] Tukārām states that God is an illusion. The devotee is an illusion. Everything is an illusion. The unreal Tukā is speaking unreal things with unreal men. Everwhere there is a reign of unreality. . . . Unreality meets unreality. The unreal man enjoys, the unreal man abandons. Unreal is the saint; unreal is māyā.

We may well conclude our investigation of Tukārām's attitude to the typically Śaṅkara view of the world by citing two more selections which have been translated by Bhandarkar[4] and included in his essay on *Vaisṇavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems*. They indicate Tukārām's closest approach to the doctrine of Māyā:—

"What means crossing a mirage to reach the yonder bank? Children play with golden coins which are but pot-sherds. Is there any profit or loss by those transactions? Little girls perform marriage (of dolls). Is the relation thus established real? The happiness or misery experienced in a dream is seen not to be true when a man awakes. The expressions, one is born, one is dead,

[1] Patwardhan, *Indian Interpreter*, 1912, vol. vii, p. 28.
[2] *Abhang* 320, Vishnubhava Jog edition. Ranade, *History of Indian Philosophy*, vol. vii, p. 343.
[3] Vishnubhava Jog, Tukārām's *abhang*, 2524.
[4] Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism*, etc., p. 98.

are all false; and the saying that persons are in bondage or are delivered is a mere waste of breath, so says Tukā."[1]

Or again: "A sugar crystal and sugar powder differ only in name. There is no difference when sweetness is to be judged. Tell me, O Pānḍurang, how thou and I are distinct. Thou hast moved the world, and me and mine are the results. Gold in the form of ornaments is worn on the foot, the hands, nose and the head. When all these are thrown into the crucible, where remains the distinction? Profit and loss are real in a dream when one goes to sleep; both vanish when one is awakened, so says Tukā."

This perplexing contradiction in Tukārām's religious position has been a source of much serious discussion among students of Marāthi literature. Some have even doubted the authenticity of these hymns. So pronouncedly Vedāntic are they, that the theistic bhakti devotion which is the dominant theme of most of Tukārām's abhangs turns colourless and insipid. Careful study of the language and style of the poet, however, would seem to prove that these Vedāntic hymns also are by the same author. To Tukārām himself, then, there was no inherent opposition or conflict of ideas in these two contrary positions. He accepts both these points of view.

He would seem to imply that, after all, everything is a mystery which surpasses all attempts at explanation on the part of man. His eagerness to be catholic in his religious outlook is probably responsible for his saying that he *prefers* the personal relationship of bhakti religion between the devotees and the person of the Bhagavān. But nowhere does he repudiate the belief in the Absolute as the impersonal Brahman; much less does he deny the validity of such a doctrine. On the other hand, he seeks to reconcile the two ideas of God as personal and of the impersonal Absolute by showing that, in the final analysis, because God alone is the ultimate existent, one cannot avoid the conclusion that His essential nature is not to be comprehended by man; not at least, in this world. Therefore, the whole thing is a mystery.

Nor does Tukārām anywhere deny all validity to empirical facts of life in this world. He recognizes the value of experiencing the grace of God in this life, and he goes so far as to deliberately choose to be born again and again, if need be, in this world in order that he may be permitted to experience God in life's varied experiences. He would not accept release (mukti) from the Karmic circle of births and deaths with its attendant train of evanescent sorrows, for that would mean his being deprived of the religious experience of bhakti. Instead of the quiescent merging into the blissful perfection of the Absolute, he prefers to be able to main-

[1] Cf. Macnicol, *Psalms of the Maratha Saints*, p. 85.

tain a subject-object relationship between himself and God. But his theism is too exclusively emotional, and therefore too weak and unenduring to resist the logic of the Vedānta. Tukārām's traditional Hindu background has trained him to find the ground of the universe in an ultimate Intelligence rather than in a supreme Will. So that even when he believes as a Vishṇuite in God as a God of grace, who condescends to enter into a personal relationship with men, he seems to hesitate between the conception of the gracious Will, and a distant Mind whose emanations and manifestations are but pale counterfeit presentments of His pure nature. And they have to be accepted—mysteriously enough—as accommodations on the part of God to this lower regions of His Being. They are necessary, if man is ever to come to knowledge of a God so far removed, and essentially incomprehensible.

5

One of the contemporaries of Tukārām was Rāmdās. Both of them were born in the same year (1608). They do not seem to have met each other, however; although the two gurus held each other in mutual esteem. Rāmdās, at any rate, claimed to be much influenced by the soul-stirring abhangs of Tukārām. There is a story to the effect that Tukārām had commended Rāmdās to Śivājī as a suitable guru for the chieftain. But the authenticity of this communication is questioned.[1] Tukārām passed away in 1648, just about the time Rāmdās was being acclaimed as the founder of a new sectarian movement.

The Rāmdāsi movement sought to popularize the worship of Rāmā, on the one hand, and to relate it with advaita teachings on the other. In placing such a pronounced emphasis on Vedānta philosophy, and by making Śrī Rāmā the supreme object of worship, Rāmdās differed from Tukārām and certain other contemporary poets of Maharāshṭra. Most of them, as we have already indicated, were devotees of Viṭhobā, the Vishṇuite god at Pāṇḍharpūr. Moreover, while these other saints doubtless accepted the advaita teachings, it would appear as though they did not make it a major part of their message, as does Rāmdās.

Rāmdās also was a prolific writer, though not all of his writings have been published. Of these, the most valued are the *Manache Sloka* and the *Dāsbodh*. The former is a collection of two hundred and five verses which give "advice to the mind". These verses are very popular, and the disciples of Rāmdās repeat them as they

[1] J. N. Fraser and J. F. Edwards, *Life and Teachings of Tukaram*, p. 18.

journey from place to place, begging alms. They cover a wide variety of topics such as devotion to Rāmā, attaining self-control, renunciation, meditation upon Brahman, and obtaining release from this life of Karma and transmigration.

Dāsbodh, on the other hand, is specifically a philosophic work which aims to teach his disciples that there is but one reality, namely Brahman. This he does by many illustrations. The main theme is that everywhere and pervading all is the *Parabrahman*. All creation is wrapped up in Him and He cannot be compared to any other thing. For He is nameless, formless, and beyond the reach of the minds of men. He pervades all the worlds, including Vishṇu's heaven, Śiva's mountain, Indra's world, the fourteen worlds, the lower regions of the serpents and all other places. "The Brahman", Rāmdās tells us, "cannot be known by the mind. All illustrations fail to supply a symbol, for in Him there is neither attachment nor detachment, and He cannot be described by the Vedas, Śāstras, or Purāṇas. He is neither visible nor invisible, and is without a witness, even the Śrutis being ignorant of the end of Brahman."[1]

The ultimate truth of the sole reality of the Brahman is, however, hid from us because of the power of Māyā. The truth remains concealed, though existing; the false appears to us as existing, though it does not.[2] In this manner the world of māyā-creation is deceptive. In the eighth adhyāya of the Dāsbodh, Rāmdās describes the whole process of creation by God as due to the power of māyā. The first illusion existed even when the world did not exist, when the universe with its seven coverings had not come into being, when the gods Brahma, Vishṇu and Maheśa did not exist, when the earth, the mountains and the oceans had not come into existence.[3] The various worlds, the stars, the sun and moon, the seven continents, and the fourteen heavens were created only later through the agency of Māyā's cosmic power. Therefore, we are urged by the poet to avoid the five elements which constitute the world as unreal, for only then can we attain to Reality. Just as men enter into a temple only after the threshold is crossed, so also when the phenomenal world is crossed do we attain to the Real.

This would mean that, in the thought of Rāmdās, the world, though metaphysically unreal, is not only valid for all practical purposes, but that the varied experiences of life, because of their empirical validity, provide a preliminary discipline to the bhakta. If he can see through the changing scenes of life to the abiding reality of the One behind the many, and if in spite of the world's

[1] *Manache Sloka*, 192, 193.
[2] *Dāsbodh*, VII, 10–65.
[3] *Ibid.*, VIII, 4, 47 ff.

varied attractions, which by themselves are strong enough to pull the seeker away from eternal values, the bhakta persists in seeking for God he is liberated. The process is gradual. The four stages for the attainment of *mukti* are described variously. In one place they are described as *salokata* or living in the same world as the Paramātman; *samīpata*, or living in close proximity to God; *sarūpata*, or likeness to God, reflecting His glory; and fourthly *sayujyata*, or absorption in God. When the jīvātman reaches the fourth stage the world will come to an end; the earth with its mountains will be reduced to ashes; the gods will disappear; then the Ātman alone will remain to be united with the Brahman.[1] In another place the stages are named as *baddha*, or being confined to the world; *mumukṣa*, or the state of desiring release; *sādhaka*, or the condition where "release" is being achieved; and *siddha*, when "release" is achieved. The *siddha* is the one who is at rest in God, with all doubts removed and all attachments severed. He lives in Brahman: he *is* Brahman.[2]

The aspirant for mukti, to be finally freed from the burden of works, which entails a continuous series of lives so that the karmic process may work out its effects, should realize his unity with the Brahman, in knowledge of whom alone he should live. Therefore Rāmdās writes: "What is seen by the eye does not last eternally, and that which is involved in sudden change disappears in the course of time. Later on all will go away and nothing remain; therefore, O mind, seek the everlasting and eternal truth. That which cannot be broken or shaken or removed is beyond the reach of consciousness. That being which exists in one form cannot tolerate the thought of duality; therefore, O mind, seek the everlasting and eternal One."[3]

Rāmdās' theory of the world is directly derived from his firm belief in the absolute existence of Brahman. If God alone is abidingly real, and if everything that is in the universe is derived from Him, the inevitable conclusion to which the poet is forced is that nothing else can be but the Parabrahman. Although the nature of that ultimate reality is not to be known, to enter into personal relationship with God in this life is possible through bhakti directed towards his avatāra in Rāmā. Such bhakti-relationship was, however, a preliminary step, a prerequisite, without which it was impossible to progress towards the realization that God alone is, and all else is not. The fact which bears down with a compulsion he could scarcely avoid, is that God, though essentially unknowable, will have to be realized if man would

[1] *Dāsbodh*, IV, 10, 29. [2] *Ibid.*, VIII, 42 ff.
[3] *Manache Sloka*, 146, 147.

desire liberation from the inexorable bondage of Karma. Karma worked out its effects only so long as the knowledge of the Parabrahman had not dawned upon men: the knowledge, that is, of Brahman as the perfectly inactive, pure intelligence, and of whose very nature was every jīvātman. But such knowledge is to be acquired only gradually, through the discipline of Bhakti. Bhakti has to be practised here on earth. Therefore, the redemptive value of the empirical facts of experience in this world, in the process of salvation, is accepted, although their absolute validity is laid in question.

There is, besides, a fundamental inconsistency in the whole thought-fabric of the religious position of Rāmdās. Reality is accepted as both personal and impersonal, and these two ideas are admitted as of equal religious value, for whether one believed in God either as the absolute Parabrahman or as the personal Bhagavān personalized in Rāmā, the end of the religious quest was attained in any case, namely, release from the bondage of the deed. What is of significance to us is that the reality of the deed, which after all is the most fundamental fact of experience in the world, is thus disproved. Life on earth is inexplicable. It is real, for it does have tremendous consequences which are so far flung as to necessitate a series of births and deaths; and at the same time it is unreal, for all those miserable consequences need not be if the individual, knowing that he is *baddha*, bound "like a blind man groping in the darkness, unable to distinguish between good and bad, the fit and the unfit, action or inaction, reality or illusion", realizes that the world is false, and that Brahman alone is real. How this can be is māyā, a mystery.

Of all the Marāthi poets, Rāmdās comes nearest to the position of Śaṅkara. But not being primarily a philosopher his interest is not in explaining how this universe, and life in it, is Māyā. For, he nowhere goes deeply enough into the problem to show whether this world is a creation of the cosmic māyā power of God or if it is fundamentally the outcome of individual avidyā, or whether it is both. Such nice problems do not concern him. He is chiefly occupied with the practical issue of indicating a method of liberation from this sorry state of things man finds himself in. Consequently his attitude towards life tended to be pessimistic, and his thought about "salvation" is negative rather than positive, emphasizing the idea of escape from the world rather than salvation for a fuller and richer life. The belief in Karma and transmigration was an iron chain that prevented Rāmdās from rising to the loftiest conception of salvation in which positive thought prevailed and spiritual processes were predominant.

6

Tulsī Dās (1532–1623) is another outstanding figure in the great movement of religious reform in the period we are considering. There is no doubt that his influence is still a potent factor in shaping the religious creed of a great number of Hindus in the north and west of India. This is largely due to the great esteem in which his book, the *Rāma-Charita-Mānasa*, "The Lake of the Deeds of Rāmā", is held in the popular estimation. Round the name of Rāmā, Tulsī Dās gathered a wealth of religious fervour and popular devotion, based on the doctrine of bhakti towards Rāmā who, as the avatār of Krishṇa, manifests the love and the grace of God. For all practical purposes the "Lake of Rāmā's Deeds" has become "The Bible of the Hindus who live between the Himalayas and the Vindhyas".[1] So that, although he gathered no special disciples about him, nor created any distinct school of thought, through his great poem which is "a blend of the Arabian Nights, a philosophical tractate, and a book of devotion", Tulsī Dās helped the man in the street to formulate for himself a religious creed.

Towards the close of that poem, the wise crow Bhāsuṇḍi relates how, once as a Brahman, he went to the great saints living in the forests to hear about the greatness of Vishṇu. But every sage gave him the same reply: "The Lord is present in all his creatures." Then he went to the seer Lomas who lived on mount Meru. "The great saint, being himself a philosopher, devoted to the mystery of the transcendental . . . began a sermon on Brahm, the unbegotten, the indivisible, the immaterial, the sovereign of the heart, unchangeable, unwishful, nameless, formless . . . identical with yourself, you and he being one as absolutely as a wave and its water; so the Vedas declare. . . . 'But the worship of the impersonal laid no hold on my heart,' said Bhāsuṇḍi and he cried, 'Tell me, holy father, how to worship the Incarnate. Devotion to Rāmā, O wisest of Sages, is like the element of water and my soul—which is, as it were, a fish—how can it exist without it?' "[2]

And yet Tulsī Dās starts from the fundamental conception of all Hindu philosophical theology, of the eternal Brahman, passionless, formless, without attributes (nirguṇa);[3] and the relation of this Parabrahman to the world is presented in certain places in terms of popular mythology and in certain other places in terms of the Vedānta. Śrī Rāmā himself instructs his brother Lakshmaṇa in

[1] Grierson, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1903, p. 456.
[2] Growse, *The Ramāyāna of Tulsī Dās*, Allahabad, 1833, vii, 107–110, pp. 553–56.
[3] *Ibid.*, i, 26, p. 16.

the doctrine of Māyā,[1] discoursing to him on the illusion of the individual self, indicating that the distinction between "mine and thine" is false since God and the soul are really one.

But the principle of advaita is abruptly shelved and the conversation turns to bhakti devotion. Śrī Rāmā insists on the reality of both the beings linked in the mutual affection of the bhakti-bond, in which the devotee is never completely merged in the Lord. However, he goes on, existence is but a dream of the night, and only those who are devoted to Rāmā in thought, word and deed escape the error. It is a moral, not a metaphysical, awakening[2] which makes possible this understanding.

In one passage[3] in his *Rāma-Charita-Mānasa*, Tulsī Dās states that wealth, power and beauty are only Māyā's instruments. Even the greatest gods and sages are blinded by her wiles. At the same time in certain other passages, Sītā, as the consort of Rāmā, the Lord of the universe, is the mother of the world. And as such she is described as Māyā, the radiant embodiment of creative might.[4] These passages would thus imply that the māyā śakti embodied in the wife of Rāmā is regarded as being responsible for the creation, so that God is indirectly connected with the world of becoming, although as ultimate being, the "motionless mover" of the universe, He is in absolute inactivity.

7

In the religious teachings of both Kabīr (1440–1518) and of Nānak (1469–1538) we find strong evidence of the firm hold that the doctrine of Māyā had on the minds of the men of their age. Although Kabīr and Nānak had turned away from certain fundamentals of their ancestral Hindu faith, they still adhered closely to the belief that the world is māyā. They would not subscribe to the Māyā theory of Śaṅkara Vedānta. But they hold that, in some form or other, the advaitic explanation of the phenomenal world ought to be preserved in all true religion. Neither Kabīr nor Nānak is a systematic thinker. Being eclectic teachers they are prompted more by emotional impulse rather than by reflective analysis. Consequently we should not expect to find in their thinking either well-considered theology or sound metaphysics.

Their chief aim is to press home the claims of a Hinduism modified in the light of Islamic monotheism. According to West-

[1] Growse, *The Ramāyāna of Tulsī Dās*, Allahabad, 1833, iii, 10–12, pp. 343 ff. [2] *Ibid.*, ii, 89–91, p. 223. [3] *Ibid.*, vii, 70, p. 531.
[4] *Ibid.*, i, 152, p. 74; vi, 105, p. 493; ii, 241, p. 295.

cott the term *muwahid*, or a believer in one God, which is given to Kabīr in the Dābistān, is evidence enough that his essential doctrine was monotheistic.[1] But the background of Kabīr's thought is decidedly Hindu. His favourite name for God is Rām. Like all his Vaishṇavite predecessors, he also seeks release from transmigration, and holds to the belief in the efficacy of bhakti as a means therefor. He may reject the formal darśanas of Hindu philosophy, but the language of the sampradāyas is often on his lips. In Nānak also we find practically the same doctrines as Kabīr had taught; but carried further, and organized more fully, into a system. And on the whole the evidence of the influence of Hindu thought is perhaps more pronounced in Nānak than in Kabīr.

In the writings of Kabīr there are many passages which would seem to indicate that he was really a monist. But the prevalence of so many other passages, equally significant, which are definitely theistic, proves rather that Kabīr was not logically consistent in his philosophical outlook.

> *Tat tvam asi* is the preaching of the Upanishads; that is their message.
> Great is their reliance upon this; but how can they, however mighty, describe Him?
> How can I explain His form or outline? There is no second who has seen Him;
> How can I describe the condition of the unconditioned, who has neither village nor resting-place?
> He who must be seen without qualities; by what name shall I call Him?

So writes Kabīr, and yet the God whom he worshipped[2] was not by any means a mere abstraction. He used attributes to describe Him. He was the Saviour, merciful, joyous, and perfect. Kabīr describes him in some places as Father.

> My Father is the great Lord,
> How shall I go to that Father?
> I am thy son, thou art my Father.[3]

Nevertheless, Kabīr is conscious that the only way he could relate the world to God is through the idea of Māyā.

> The creature is in Brahman, and the Brahman is in the creature: they are ever distinct, yet ever united.
> He Himself is the tree, the seed, and the germ.
> He Himself is the flower, the fruit and the shade,

[1] M. A. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Oxford, 1909, vol. vi, pp. 263, 264 (translation of Adi-Granth, Bhairan 13).

[2] *Bījak, Ramaini*, 6–8.

[3] *Ādi-Granth*, Asa, 3.

He Himself is the sun, the light, and the lighted.
He Himself is Brahman, creature, and Māyā.
He Himself is the manifold form, the infinite space.[1]

The metaphysical problem involved in a creed so predominately monistic does not trouble him. What is of vital moment to Kabīr is that, even in such a universe, which is essentially Brahman, the vitiating effects of the law of Karma bring on men a weary round of births, for "all men bound by their acts transmigrate".[2] But, he goes on to add, "Since my attention is fixed on God, I no longer suspect that I shall suffer transmigration."[3] The release from the circuit of saṁsāra is effected by becoming "God-like", which is in fact the very essence of man's ultimate being. And since God is in blissful inaction and is not bound by the law of retribution, so *in* God (or *with* God, the distinction not being clear in Kabīr's mind) the dread of transmigration is at an end.

Why men are not released from the toils of Karma is because they are deluded by māyā. In fact, the whole creation is deluded by it.

The fishes in the water are led by Māyā;
The moths round the lamp are influenced by Māyā—
Through Māyā the elephant feeleth lust;
Creeping things, and bumble-bees perish through Māyā;
My brethren, Māyā is so bewitching that she deludes all living beings.

The demigods are saturated with Māyā;
So are the Ocean, the firmament, and the earth.[4]
Māyā and Desire are troubles of the World;
But no one thinks so of this.
Māyā and Desire are a troublesome noose;
O saints, that which comes and goes, is Māyā.[5]

In this sense Kabīr uses the term māyā; more often with an ethical content than as a philosophic concept. Macauliffe, for one, prefers to translate "māyā" as "mammon" because he holds that the word stands in Kabīr verse for what in Christian theology are called "the deceits of the world and the flesh". They are effective hindrances to the knowledge of God. But until this knowledge of God is acquired, men cannot realize that the things around them are deceptive and unreal.

[1] Sri Kshitimohan Sen, *Kabīr*, Bolpur, 1910, I, 85, translated by R. Tagore. [2] *Ādi-Granth*, Gauri, 50. [3] *Ibid.*, Prabhati, i.
[4] M. A. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Oxford, 1909, vol. vi, pp. 263, 264, translation of *Ādi-Granth*, Bhairan, 13. [5] *Bījak*, *Ramaini*, 76.

Used in this sense, the term māyā seems to revert to its older meaning of magical power, and is represented as a woman.

> The woman hath conquered the three worlds;
> She hath made the eighteen Purāṇas and the places of pilgrimage love her;
> She hath pierced the heart of Brahma, Vishṇu and Śiva.
> And infatuated great kings and sovereigns.
> There are no bounds to the woman;
> She is in collusion with the five evil passions.[1]

The underlying notion is that the world-creation casts a spell over men, and beguiles them into doing things they would not in their right senses. If they were in their right sense they would realize that they are of the same eternal nature as the abiding Being of God. The world, in this sense, is māyā. There is obviously no metaphysical implication in such a conception. But the subtle philosophy of the Vedānta, in a popular form, not being unknown to the readers of Kabīr, and the implicit faith in the law of Karma-transmigration, give added significance to the unreality of the world. Whether their guru intended it so or not, to the Kabīr Panthīs the belief in the world as Māyā has become part of their creed.

Unlike the other reformers of this period who did not cut themselves off from the fold of Hinduism (though they came to be the source of inspiration, directly or indirectly, for a number of sects *within* Hinduism), Nānak was the founder of a new religion. But the distinctiveness of Sīkhism as a religion in India is open to question because "the line between Sikhs and Hindus is vague in the extreme". Writing in the Census Report of 1901, Mr. A. A. Rose[2] observes how difficult it is to distinguish the creed of the Sikh to-day: "In the case of Sikhism there is the great difficulty that the Gurus, from first to last, strove, like the modern Hindu reformers, not to break away from the ancient beliefs but to reconcile them with a purer creed. Unfortunately this resulted, as probably it always must result, in a medley of beliefs, so that within Sikhism we find many religious ideas at variance with its real creed. That creed involves belief in one God, condemning the worship of other deities: it prohibits idolatry, pilgrimages to the great shrines of Hinduism, faith in omens, charms or witchcraft; and does not recognize ceremonial impurity at birth or death. . . . But this creed is probably accepted and acted up to by a very small number even of those who call themselves true Sikhs."

[1] *Ādi-Granth*, Gaund, 8.
[2] *Census of India Reports*, Punjab, 1911, Part I, p. 153.

This would imply that, with the passage of time, in the original "incompletely fused amalgam of ideas and sentiments" contributed alike by Hinduism and Mohammedanism which formed the teachings of Guru Nānak, the Hindu element has come to be increasingly dominant. The strange vitality which the ideas of Māyā and Karma-saṁsāra possess make it well-nigh impossible for any reformer thoroughly to eradicate them from the popular Hindu mind; more so from the thought of the speculative philosopher. Those ideas persist in the subconscious, and assert their right to interpret values, even where other criteria of judgment have been adopted.

In the case of Sikhism, however, the Hindu doctrines of rebirth and māyā were always accepted. They were included in the Sikh religious creed by Nānak himself; they provided a characteristic Hindu mould to the guru's teachings. It is true, at the same time, that Nānak attempted to re-state these doctrines in the light of Islamic thought, but the effect was too feeble to be lasting. As Macnicol puts it, "the Mohammadan elements in his (Nānak's) thought react upon these doctrines in a way that is strange to Hinduism and scarcely reconcilable with it".[1] In a sense, Nānak was attempting the impossible.

Nānak's insistence upon one God is no doubt due to the influence of Islam. But while there is this affirmation of the divine unity, that there is but one God, whose name is true, the creator of all that is, Nānak also maintains that God is pre-eminently the Nirākāra, the Formless One, who is "inaccessible and inapprehensible".[2] It has been rightly pointed out, in this connection, that the word monotheism has a different connotation when it is used by those who inherit a radical pantheism which colours every aspect of belief.[3] And so it is not strange to hear Nānak, the "monotheist", exclaim: "Wherever I look, there is God: no one else is seen." He is the lake and the swan, the lotus and the lily, the fisherman and the fish, the net, the lead, the bait. So He is "Himself the worshipper. Search not for the True One afar off, He is in every heart, the light within."[4]

Consequently, to Nānak, the world of Nature and the universe of beings were not only God's creation but, in essence, the creation was itself God. And yet such an idea is not wholly acceptable to him, because the Mohammedan stress on the transcendence and the sole sovereignty of God over creation had held a special fascination for him. So he says, "God made

[1] Macnicol, *Indian Theism*, p. 148.
[2] *Jāpji*, i, Macauliffe, I, p. 196.
[3] J. E. Abbott, *Stotramālā*, 1930, p. xii.
[4] Macauliffe, I, pp. 188, 254, 265, 328.

māyā by His power; seated he beheld his work with delight."[1] So that, on the one hand, the world is the scene of God's providence and, on the other, the universe is a mighty game of irresponsible power, a divine sport on the part of infinity.

Incongruously enough, Nānak declares that the creator who made the world also decreed transmigration, for rebirth and deliverance are absolutely dependent on God's will. He knows to whom He may give release, and to such He Himself gives it.[2] The law of Karmá operates automatically, at the same time, though the sovereign will of God is placed above it. So that the consequence of the deed is acknowledged; God, as it were, permitting its ubiquitous sway. The strange medley of the Islamic and the Hindu belief of *Kismet* and *Karma* is expressed thus:

> The recording angels take with them, a record of man's acts.
> It is he himself soweth and he himself reapeth.
> Nānak, man suffereth transmigration by God's order.[3]

Salvation in Sikhism is the same as the Hindu conception of liberation from this world where life is completely controlled by Karmic law of action. If man but submitted himself to God's will and acted in accordance with it, then "as a herdsman keepeth watch over his cattle so God day and night guardeth man and keepeth him in happiness".[4] By His order man would share his lot of pre-ordained pleasure and pain till at God's good pleasure man obtained release. If only man could know God to bide by His Will!

But God is unknowable. At the very outset of the *Jāpji* there is a telling passage which drives home this truth in unmistakable terms. "By thinking I cannot obtain a conception of Him, even though I think hundreds of thousands of times. Even though I be silent and keep my attention firmly fixed on Him, I cannot preserve silence. The hunger of the hungry for God subsideth not though they obtain the load of the worlds. If a man should have thousands and hundreds of thousands of devices, even one would not assist him in obtaining God."[5]

What is it that makes Him inaccessible and concealed to men? Kabīr answers: The blindness of the inward eye, the lust of the world, Māyā, the great illusion, not of metaphysical reality so much as of moral materialism. On the side of God, māyā is, indeed, the power which constituted the original stuff of the universe with its three constituent elements of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. But in the sphere of the human, māyā would appear to be the force of attraction to the things of sense, the pleasures of

[1] Macauliffe, I, p. 219.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 209, 229.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 206.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 301.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 196.

passion, wealth and ease which fill the mind with a sense of egoism. This egoism effectively prevents men from realizing the need for deliverance from life and understanding that deliverance is his alone who has rid himself of this "I-consciousness", and would say, "If it please thee, O Lord, Thou art mine and I am Thine".[1]

8

Another of these bhakti cults had its origin in Bengal, the leader of which became known as Chaitanya (1486–1530). "His life", in the words of the Bengali historian, "was a course of thanksgiving, tears, hymns and praises offered to God."[2] It was an extremely emotional type of religion which Chaitanya preached, one of the characteristics of his sect being the influence in it of the *kīrtan* or worship by means of music and singing. "In the course of the *kīrtan* . . . they would become senseless or roll on the ground, embrace one another, laugh and cry alternately. . . . They felt themselves immersed, as it were, in a sea of divine *bhakti*. They felt as if they were with Krishṇa and Krishṇa with them."[3]

Chaitanya was not an intellectual. The most authoritative source for the teaching of the sect is the Chaitanya Charitrāmṛita: but it is impossible to say how far truly representative it is of Chaitanya's teachings. It seems impossible that much of the elaborate theologizing which is there put into Chaitanya's mouth could have been uttered by him. The general impression we gain of him from the book is rather of one indifferent to all argumentation and increasingly given over to emotional ecstasies. So that it is not improbable that the speculative element in the teaching of the sect is the product of other minds, of later disciples.

The exact nature of the relation of God to the material creation and the individual soul is something of a mystery in the philosophy of this sect. It is generally accepted that the universe has come into being because of God's infinite powers and that it has a substantial reality in consequence. But it is felt that a clear statement of that reality is admittedly impossible. Human souls are of the Supreme and dependent upon Him. They are regarded as atomic portions of His nature, but yet separate and distinct.

To the Chaitanya thinker neither monism nor dualism is acceptable; with the result that he takes refuge in an intermediate

[1] Macauliffe, I, p. 317.
[2] D. C. Sen, *History of Bengali Language and Literature*, Calcutta University, p. 441.
[3] S. K. Ghose, *Lord Gauranga*, Patrika Office, Calcutta, p. 109.

position, a compromise called *acintya-bhedābheda*, an "incomprehensible dualistic monism" which, according to a modern writer, "is not understood, but felt in the soul as intuitive truth".[1]

The world is the *māyic jagat*, the sphere where the power of illusion easily binds men in fetters of material enjoyment, in consequence of which they suffer the pangs of perpetual rebirth. But it is also the place where the noblest operations are possible to the soul, where bhakti may be learned and spiritual character developed. Even in this world the eye of faith can see the Lord in one's fellowmen, and in every object of nature.[2] This does not mean a conception of nature as revealing God such as is familiar to Western thought. It is rather that every object takes on the form of Kṛishṇa to the eye of the devotee. He does not see natural objects as Nature: he sees only Kṛishṇa.

According to Chaitanya, the state from which men are saved is that of bondage to the world, and that to which they are saved is an eternal experience of love. Souls are eternal servants of Kṛishṇa; but through forgetfulness they become fettered and entangled in things material, which is the power of illusion, māyā śakti.[3] As long as the soul continues in this state it is subject to birth and re-birth, with all the sufferings that accompany the working of the law of Karma. But when, by whatever means, the soul, becoming conscious of its rightful relation to Kṛishṇa as its Lord and Saviour, turns to him in faith, it is rid of illusion and finds salvation through the experiences of bhakti.

So that it would appear, as it has been already indicated, that in the t[illegible] ect, the reality of the world, and of [illegible], are stoutly maintained as against the illusion theory of Śaṅkara. But the nature of this reality is not entirely clear. The term māyā śakti is used to signify the delusive nature of the material pleasures of life which effectively conceal from the seeker the actual presence of God in the form of Kṛishṇa, in adoration of whom is real happiness.

9

The significance of the writings of these poet saints whose contribution to the religious thought of Hindu India in general, and of later Vaishṇavite cults in particular, we have been trying to evaluate is far reaching in its consequence. For, it must be

[1] Krishnadas Kaviraj, *Chaitanya Charitrāmṛita*, edited by Mazumdar, Calcutta, 1922, II, 20, p. 348.

[2] *Ibid.*, II, p. 221.

[3] *Ibid.*, II, 20, p. 349.

admitted, the popular religion of the Hindu is largely based on ideas derived from the study of the devotional literature produced by these poet saints. Particularly is this so when we come to consider the hold that the doctrine of Māyā has upon the mind of the ordinary man. To the common man in Hindu India, assuredly, māyā does not convey any specific theological or metaphysical connotation; not, at any rate, as the doctrine over which the schoolmen of the Vedānta endlessly debated. Nevertheless, as a popular tenet of faith in Hinduism, belief in Māyā has tremendous consequences on practical problems of conduct, and the general outlook on life of the more thoughtful Hindu, when he is in a pensive mood.

It is apparent that in the mind of these saints there is much confusion between the two concepts of Reality as the impersonal Absolute, and of God as personal. In a sense, it is deliberate. It is true that an attempt is made in some cases to reconcile these two notions in a higher synthesis. But not successfully. The explanations offered are put in the form of mythological allegory or of mystic fancy; as such they do not lend themselves to the critical analysis and evaluation of reason. The traditional view is that the personal concept and the impersonal view of Reality are superseded by a trans-personal concept which is explicable only to mystic experience and not to the logic of the human understanding. But that is no satisfactory explanation. The more common view is that both these descriptions of Reality are equally valid. The nature of God is beyond human understanding.

In the final analysis, to all these saints, the essential nature of Reality is unknowable. But the conviction is equally strong that Reality alone is, and that it is "one without a second". Consequently, the end of religion for the individual is to attain to the unitary nature of that one Reality. At the same time, it is admitted that the individual lives, and has his being, in this world of manyness. For all practical purposes, truly enough, every deed has its consequence. In fact, all life's varied experiences are to be explained in terms of the sequentiality of works, which, it is believed, extends beyond this life to a series of other lives necessitated by the fact that the continued effects of accumulated Karma have to "bear fruit". The principle of Karma works, as it were, automatically. No one, not even God, can interfere with its working. Karma is, therefore, outside Reality. The main concern of the individual is to free himself from the clutches of the law of Karma. This can only be by attaining to the nature of Reality which, as has been indicated, is outside the reach of Karma.

One reason why the Hindu finds it difficult to accept the belief in God as a person is because the idea of personality to the Hindu mind implies action (Karma). But action leads to action with its consequent train of births and re-births, till all action has worked itself out. Surely, then, it would follow that God Himself would be brought under the subjection of this necessitarian, Karmic process if He were also to be a "person". He also would have to suffer the consequences of His deeds; and that is unthinkable. Therefore, although for the religious devotion of the Bhakta, God has to be personalized in some avatār or other, such a personal concept of the deity has to be saved from being brought under the purview of the inexorable law of Karma. To do this, the only possible way seems to be to relate such a personal deity with a basic fundamental concept of the impersonal Absolute who is the very perfection of inactivity and as such outside Karma's jurisdiction; the personal deity being more of a shadow than a substance.

Therefore, it is not surprising to find in these Bhakti cults an inherent conflict between an instinctive theism, on the one hand, which craves the satisfaction that comes from worship, and experience of the divine love, and an authoritative monism, on the other, which imposes itself upon the adherents of these cults and weakens the confidence and hope that theism tends to bring them. The warmth of the bhakti devotion finds itself forced to reconcile itself with the cold austerity of the advaita, and it does so by accepting a place not in the region of ultimate truth, but in the lower sphere of ignorance (avidyā) and illusion (māyā). Often the Bhaktas express resentment against the compromise to which they are forced by the traditional authority of the Vedānta, but nowhere do they seriously disparage the conclusions of what seems to them its finished logic. One at least of these Bhaktas deliberately chooses the bondage of Karma and re-birth so that he may enjoy fellowship with a God to the "release" of absorption into the eternal Brahman, which, however, even he admits is the supreme goal.

"Few of the authors of these lyrics", says a modern student of Marāthi Bhakti literature, "have any secular learning, but they are wise in the experience of life's sorrows and in their sense of the innate and inextinguishable thirst of the human heart for God. Their interest in this world and its concerns and in the beauty that it spreads around them is altogether secondary to their absorbing interest in their relation to God. The nature upon which their eyes are ever turned is their own human nature with its failures and its yearnings. The visible world is for them

'a hieroglyphic of the spiritual world', and in that world their thoughts mainly dwell."[1]

So that to these saint-reformers, although the problem of the metaphysical reality or otherwise of the world was not of primary moment, the world was an effective deterrent to man's experience of fellowship with God. Such fellowship demanded a single-minded devotion which was rendered impossible by the varied attractions of life. These attractions bound the individual to the unreal and the evanescent. The facts of life drew men into their coils by a magic spell such as an enchantress casts over men and beguiled them into pleasures which have no lasting value; which, on the other hand, have actual negative value in that they lead men astray from the values which would make for real happiness. Such real happiness, these saints taught, was to be found in fellowship with God secondarily; but primarily in mystic realization of oneness with the absolute Brahman.

In this sense the world, to them, is Māyā, false and seductive; and so to be denied. Nevertheless, its experiences were not to be regarded as merely imaginary. Such experiences were real enough to have terrible consequences on the individual; because as a result of the experiential facts of this workaday world men became involved in the inevitable train of the karmic process of saṁsāra. That was certainly no mere delusion. Moreover, such experiences were involved also in the experimental faith of bhakti devotion, where the individual actually tasted the joys of sweet communion with a God of grace and love. So real was this experience that one of these bhaktas, as previously indicated, prefers the miseries of life on earth so that he may experience fellowship with God.

But it is apparent that when the word māyā is used by these Bhaktas it is rather to connote the vanity of the world's charms. It is used in a "moral" sense, it is true; to them "māyā" is just the deceitful world which is like a witch, a temptress like John Bunyan's Madame Bubble. But since their theological outlook is deeply dyed with the colour of Vedāntic monism, the metaphysical implications of the term crept in just the same. The world was līlā, a sport of the Deity, a purposeless activity without a goal or end.

From the later history of these Vishṇuite cults, it is obvious that the unreality of the worldly existence is an axiom to the Hindu. There is little doubt also that the attitude to life that is the inevitable consequence to such a view is very widely spread throughout the land. It is not only that the world is māyā in

[1] N. Macnicol, *Living Religions of the Indian People*, Association Press, Calcutta, 1934, p. 82.

the sense that it stands for "mammon" and the immoral materialism which is associated with it; but that the world is māyā in the sense that nothing about it is of abiding value; and what is more, that everything about it is of negative value.

When it is claimed that these poet saints popularized the Vedānta it is implied that, largely due to them, Vedāntic ideas of the sole reality of the Brahman and the māyā-nature of the world have come to possess such a strong hold on the minds of the unlettered religious many. And along with it the assumption that the karma effect on every deed is inevitable; the māyā belief in the "unreality" of it all has inbred in the minds of men these many generations an attitude of indifference to the world in India. After all, what did anything matter; it was māyā. That seemed an explanation satisfactory enough for those who are brought up in the tradition of these abhangs which have come to take the place of the *prasthāna traya*, the triple canon of the Vedānta, in the religion of the average Vishṇuite Hindu.

Inevitably, also, such a conception of human life as these religious teachers propounded leads to asceticism. If temporal relationships are unreal, then to reach the real they must be ignored; such relation binds men to repeated birth in this nether region of illusion. The fundamental tenet of the Vedānta that the Brahman alone is real logically drives one to the conclusion that all else is unreal.

It may be contended that, perhaps, this is the conviction of the speculative few, but not the creed of the many. The fact, however, remains that though interpretations of the doctrines of the sole existence of the Brahman and the ultimate identity of the individual Ātman with it have differed, the authority of the Vedānta has been left unquestioned, and of its various interpreters Śaṅkara retained and still retains the chief authority. In the fourteenth century Jñāneśvara speaks with deep respect of this high Vedānta teaching, calling it "the Brahma vidyā which rooteth out all idea of duality". Ekanātha in the sixteenth century in a poem, the *Bhikshugītā*, which has always been popular in the Marāthi country, speaks of the "world, consisting of friends, neutrals and foes", which affects a man with pleasure and pain "as being a phantasm of his mind due to ignorance and nothing else".

Even if it is admitted that the term māyā is used in the devotional lyrics in a moral rather than a metaphysical sense, it eventually makes not much difference. For the moral ideal which the bhakta holds before himself does not seem to differ from the moral ideal that Hinduism through its philosophic teaching sets before its adherents. The *summum bonum* of the Hindu is the

same whether he is an adherent of the emotional faith of Bhakti or of Vedāntic monism. The moral awakening of which the Bhaktas speak, that is, the disenchantment from the spell of the world's attractions, is really the dawning on the mind of the knowledge of the sole reality of God and the identity of the *jīvātman* with the *paramātman*. The real basis of religion in Hindu thought is metaphysical, however imperfectly that metaphysic may be constructed; and in spite of the "practical motive" of liberation, which is the goal of the religious quest, the end continues to be metaphysical. Consequently, as Vāmdeo Sāstri puts it to Sir Alfred Lyal, "All this firm ground of belief and conduct becomes submerged in the vague, fluctuating intellectualism of the Hindus. Vainly you prove to us that the conception of an impersonal, unapproachable Being is ineffectual and ethically pernicious; we recognize the moral danger but it does not stop us, for we are like mariners whom some magnetic attraction draws ever further beyond all havens to the boundless sea."[1]

[1] *Asiatic Studies*, vol. ii, pp. 86 ff.

CHAPTER IX

MĀYĀ AND THE MODERN HINDU MIND

I

The task undertaken in this chapter of our study is as audacious as it is difficult. For many reasons, at any time in the history of Hinduism, it is difficult to take a cross-section of opinion on any particular doctrine of belief, for the reason that Hinduism is unabashedly ill-defined and amorphous. Nor would it be true to claim that the opinions expressed by the modern Hindu interpreters of Indian philosophy and religion are really representative of the actual thought of present-day Hinduism. Particularly so, because as never before in her long history, Hinduism is going through a process of unprecedented change and reconstruction at the moment. The consequence is that the whole Hindu *dharma*, using that term to include the religious system, the philosophic outlook and the social *mores* (which in India are uniquely bound up with the religious belief of the people), is more ambiguous than ever in its central affirmations and more uncertain than ever in its boundaries.

So far as the unlettered peasant is concerned his religious creed, though by no means definitely formulated, certainly includes the two axiomatic beliefs of Karma and Māyā. By the former, he understands that practically everything in life is predetermined. It would not be correct to say that he is always conscious that every action he performs will "bear fruit". On the other hand, he is obsessed with the notion that everything that happens to him in life is the result of the karma of a previous birth. It is not, then, the future effects of what will be the outcome of deeds committed in this life that give him concern, so much as the feeling of terrible [illegible] his inability to avert the events and happenings [illegible] overtake him day unto day. All that is "written on his forehead"; it must needs be; nothing can prevent their occurrence in due order. Of that he is absolutely certain.

There is no one of this peasant order who does not believe in the existence of God at the same time. To the student of religion who has been used to the distinction between the personal God of religion and the impersonal concept of the speculative thinker, it is perplexing when he finds the Hindu villager indifferently referring to God as both "Him" and "It". But to the village Hindu, it is most natural. The distinction is a distinction without a difference. The more speculative of these village seers would

assure him that, essentially, the Eternal One is not to be comprehended by the human intellect. But unknowable though God is (or, perhaps, *because* He is unknowable, being far removed from the ken of mankind), He is never made responsible for the events that overtake a man in his life. No Hindu villager (not, for the moment, considering the decidedly animistic type) would ever say that what has happened to him in his life is due to God's doing. He would say, rather, "It is *my* karma."

He believes in God as the ultimate. But he does not consider Him to be the source of the good and the ill which fall to his lot in life. All that is accepted to be the outcome of the good and the ill he himself had committed in a previous birth. Life is a natural course of events, so to say, governed by the principle of karma and transmigration. Even in the popular mind, the working of this principle is unrelated to the Divine which, in the popular religious language, is alone the one *poruḷ, vastu,* substance.

Nevertheless the facts of life are real enough. The events which occur in a man's life though they are due to the decree of karma are actual. One suffers them. But in a spirit of detachment, for they are all māyā. They cannot have lasting significance to the individual who can see through their falsity in relation to the eternal substance.

In the same breath, the village seer consigns the events of life to the dictates of karmic determinism and describes the world about him as māyā. Perhaps an illustration from the Tamil screen stage will make this point clear. The most popular Tamil film, at the time of writing this chapter, is a production entitled "The Two Brothers". It is the story of two brothers living together in a "joint family" sharing their ancestral home. The elder brother has a lucrative position, as the manager of the local zamindār's estates, while the younger brother, being brought up to no profession but gifted as a singer and an actor, is not able to find a job and is forced to live on the older brother's bounty. But the wives of the two take a violent dislike to each other, chiefly because the older sister-in-law does not approve of the eternal dependence of the poor relatives. Her dislike is further aggravated by the fact of her own childlessness. She intrigues to have the brothers separated and succeeds in driving out the unemployed younger brother with his wife and two children. The younger brother goes to the city in quest of work and struggles for days in vain. At last, by the merest chance, he is discovered by a radio broadcast company and is signed up on a handsome weekly contract. The older sister-in-law intercepts and falsely appropriates all the money orders the artiste sends home to his wife and family. They still live in abject poverty, though next

door to their affluent relatives. To make things worse, the rich woman contrives to have her poor sister kidnapped and sends a telegram to the husband, who is still broadcasting in the city, that the wife has eloped with a stranger. The distracted husband, who has so long struggled and at last made good, all for the sake of his family, finds that it has been all in vain; for the home is broken and the woman he has trusted has betrayed him. He decides to commit suicide, but the rope snaps and his attempt to take his life fails. At this juncture, a *sannyāsi* appears on the scene and explains to him that everything that had happened was due to karma's law and since the whole creation is based on Māyā (māyādhāram) the universe is essentially false. Consequently he need not take things to heart. The radio star is persuaded to go to his home town where he finds that his elder brother, due to the machinations of the zamindār's wife, had been unjustly charged with misappropriation of money and summarily dismissed. The wife is also recovered from the hands of those who had carried her away. A general reconciliation takes place between the brothers and the sisters-in-law. The younger brother says: "In this māyā world whatever happens to us we must not be unnecessarily worried. All the troubles I had to endure had to be. None of you is responsible for them. It is my karma. For all you know, had your karma been like mine I might have had to deal as unjustly with you as you had to with me. So let us not talk of forgiveness."

To the common man, then, what happens in life is a mysterious combination of the real and the false. The world is obviously real from the standpoint of the Karmic process. The sequentiality of the deed is as real as it is inevitable. But since the process is not directly controlled by God, and since its effects can be neutralized by actionlessness, passivity on the part of the individual, what man experiences in this world is "false", not real. This does not mean that the doctrine of Māyā is accepted in a metaphysical sense by the average Hindu, as a theory of the world, but rather as an attitude towards life. Primarily this attitude is one of baffled mistrust. Nothing in life is dependable, and whatever overtakes us in this world, whether good or ill, cannot be explained with reference to a purposive Mind behind the world process. The only acceptable explanation is that all events in a man's life are due to the individual himself. But even there the mystery remains. For the individual can never be certain as to which event in life is the effect of which other event.

This bafflement is due to our ignorance of the exact nature of the karmic process. In the mind of the common man, however, this "ignorance" is not the same as the "Avidyā" of classical

Vedānta. It is merely an acknowledgment of man's native inability to fathom the mystery. So that the original meaning of the word "māyā", as magic, as mysterious power which blindfolds the individual, is decidedly another element in the meaning of the term as it is now used.

It is also accepted that the *Māyā loka*, the world of Māyā, casts a spell of irresistible charm over men. Man is drawn into the mad whirl of life by the power of māyā. Here, then, is an ethical implication: that the "good" man is one who is not susceptible to the magic spell of māyā, but one who has realized the delusive nature of the world's attractions. So that to be ethical would mean to be enlightened. The virtuous man is the wise man. The ignorant is still within the domain of causation and therefore subject to the effects of good and evil deeds, but the wise man is installed in transcendental freedom and therefore above all causation. Karma has no hold over him. In this sense he is beyond good and evil. He has passed from the sphere of moral struggle to that of transcendent quiescence. That is the *summum bonum* of the devout Hindu's religious and moral aspirations.

So far as the average Hindu is concerned, without committing oneself to the danger of hasty generalization, one might contend with sufficient justification that, if he is pronouncedly religious, his thought and outlook are characterized by an attitude of "world and life negation" which is conveyed by his use of the term "māyā". It consists in his regarding existence as he experiences it in himself, and as it is developed in the world, as something meaningless and sorrowful, and he resolves accordingly to bring life to a standstill in himself by mortifying his will to live, and to renounce all activity which aims at improvement of the conditions of life in this world. And as Schweitzer[1] has well pointed out, all such world-and-life negation takes no interest in the world, but regards man's life on earth either merely as a stage play in which it is his duty to participate, or only as a puzzling pilgrimage through the land of Time to Eternity.

2

But so far as the speculative thinker in modern Hindu India is concerned, there is considerable evidence to show that much reflective thought has been expended on careful analysis and critical estimate of the classical Vedānta theory of the world as

[1] A. Schweitzer, *Indian Thought and Its Development*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1937.

māyā. The cultured Hindu is peculiarly sensitive to the fact that a good deal of the criticism of the Hindu philosophy of life is directed against the Māyā Vāda of Vedānta. And a very large section of the Hindu intelligentsia holds that "the inadequate understanding of the Māyā doctrine and the popular vulgarization of it is often at the root of a faulty criticism of Indian thought".[1] Consequently there have been, of recent date, several attempts to re-state the doctrine of Māyā, not only with a view to vindicate its reasonableness as a philosophic explanation of the nature of the world, but also to prove that belief in Māyā need not necessarily produce a frame of mind and life-outlook such as would prevent active and purposive participation in the world process.

The bulk of this apologetic literature is naturally the work of the modern Vedāntins, inspired, in the main, by the life and teachings of Svāmi Vivekānanda (1862–1902). The object of the followers of Vivekānanda is achieved through the arduous labours of the members of the Rāma-Kṛishṇa Mission. Their aim is to set afoot a conscious and deliberate reorientation of the message of Vedānta to new ends such as the modern world demands of a new India. Whether the Rāmkṛishṇa Mission has realized its end of rejuvenating Hinduism or not, it has "at least shown to Hinduism what would seem to be the one way by which it may travel to an assured future as a living religion. It has set itself to accommodate the ancient doctrine to the needs of a new world. What this movement seeks, others besides its adherents see to be urgently needed. It is thus representative of a widespread movement of thought and aspiration in the religious life of the India of to-day."[2]

All modern Vedāntins are anxious to prove that the popular idea of Māyā as "nothingness" is far from what is meant by the term. On the other hand, it is regarded to imply wrong perception. When a man mistakes a glittering substance for a piece of silver, for instance, he has "knowledge" indeed; but it is wrong knowledge, inasmuch as it represents a thing as what it really is not, and also because some time later, on careful observation, the thing is found to be not silver but something else. "We are not questioning the existence of the world," points out a neo-Vedāntin,[3] "but we are questioning its value or meaning. Is it a plurality or is it a unity? is the question." It is therefore argued that the terms Māyā and Māyāvāda are concerned not with

[1] *Prabuddha Bharata*, Calcutta, vol. xlii, ii, p. 72.
[2] N. Macnicol, *The Living Religions of the Indian People*, p. 116.
[3] B. Chandrasekaria, "The Meaning of Maya", in *Vedānta Kesari*, Madras, vol. viii, p. 63.

existence but with meaning, not with the objective fact of the world phenomena but with the subjective attitude towards them.

So that the doctrine of Māyā, they contend, is really a doctrine of error, which is to be approached from the side of the individual. Such error concerns not existence but viewpoint, for it pertains to predication and false-predication which the Vedānta calls avidyā. Everything in the world accordingly exists and lays claim to reality; but its claims can be granted only when it has been proved to be a form of the expression of the Real. Therefore, they say, it is not the "reality" or otherwise of the world that is called in question, but its *finality*.

"The world around us is Māyā," writes Svāmi Rāmakṛishṇananda,[1] "for it appears beautiful and promises happiness. We run after it, trying to reach it through our senses, and struggle hard for it for years and years together, till at last it dawns on our consciousness that it was after all a wild-goose chase. We cease to run, pause to consider whether after all it was not a shadow that we were running after. The world, too, then ceases to fascinate us; but, on the other hand, it opens our mind to the treasures within, by suggesting retreat and closure of the gateways of the senses. Then the happiness which we were in search of outside will be discovered within our own self, as the man with a weak sight just considers that the lamp in a room is burning outside the room, but soon detects his mistake when the doors of the room are closed and the lamp is seen to still shed its beam illumining the room."

Viewed from this standpoint, Svāmi Vivekānanda held that the theory of Māyā was not intended to provide an explanation of the world. It was purely and simply a statement of fact. The fact is that we are placed in a world which can be reached only through the doubtful medium of the mind and the senses. The world only exists in relation to them. If they change, it will also change. The existence we give the world has no unchangeable, immovable absolute reality. It is, on the other hand, an undefinable mixture of reality and appearance, of certainty and illusion. It cannot be the one without the other.

"And the eternal contradiction between our aspirations and the wall enclosing them—between two orders having no common measure—between contradictory realities, the implacable and real fact of death and the no less real, immediate and undeniable consciousness of life—between the irrevocable working of certain intellectual and moral laws and the perpetual flux of all the conceptions of the spirit and heart—the incessant variations of

[1] Svami Rāmakṛishṇananda, "Māyā", in the *Vedānta Kesari*, Madras, vol. ii, p. 262.

good and evil, of truth and falsehood on both sides of a line in space and time—the whole coil of serpents wherein from the beginning of time the laocoon of human thought has found itself intertwined so that as it unties itself on one side it only ties its knots more tightly on the other—all this is the real world. And the real world is Māyā."[1]

To the exponents of modern advaitism, therefore, māyā should not be defined as non-existence. It is an intermediate form between the equally absolute Being and non-Being. It is not Existence, for it is only the "sport" of the Absolute. It is not non-Existence because this "sport" exists, and we cannot deny it.

How, then, can world-existence be defined? Only by a word that has been made fashionable by science in these days, it is claimed; that word is Relativity. And in M. Romain Rolland's opinion that word "gives the precise meaning of Vivekānanda's conception of the world as māyā". According to the Svāmi, "Good and bad are not two cut-and-dried separate existences. . . . The very phenomenon, which is appearing to be good now, may appear to be bad tomorrow. . . . The fire that burns the child may cook a good meal for a starving man. . . . The only way to stop evil, therefore, is to stop good also. . . . To stop death we shall have to stop life also . . . each of them (the two opposing terms) is but a different manifestation of the same thing. . . . The Vedānta says, there must come a time when we shall look back and laugh at the ideals which make us afraid of giving up our individuality."[2]

3

This idea is more systematically expounded by Prof. Kokileswar Sastri of Calcutta in his Srigopal Basu-Mallik Fellowship Lectures on the doctrine of Māyā.[3] According to this modern exposition of Māyāvāda, the world is Brahman itself "under a particular state". Therefore it cannot be different from Brahman. Because a "*slight change*" arose in Brahman as the world-existence, a separate name—Māyā—was given. But, it must be remembered, that change of state cannot, and does not, effect a real change in the nature of the thing.

The universe, prior to its modifications or differentiations into names and forms, was originally in an undeveloped, undifferentiated, *avikṛta* condition. Kokilesvar Sastri claims that it was to this *avyakta* state of the world that Śaṅkara gave the name Māyā,

[1] *Prabuddha Bharata*, vol. xxxv, p. 298.

[2] Svami Vivekananda, *Lecture on Maya and Illusion*, complete works, vol. ii, p. 97.

[3] Reprint in *Vedānta Kesari*, 1931, pp. 403 ff.

This Māyā has been identified in the later Vedānta with *Prāṇa*, and Prāṇa being a form of energy, it cannot exist and operate independently; it must have Brahman for its substratum. An energy *apart* from its substratum *āśraya*, is a figment of the imagination. So it is indicated that Śaṅkara himself made the Māyā-world *parameśvarādhīna*, dependent on the Brahman.

The term *asat* is also used to designate this undifferentiated primordial state of this world. The term asat does not signify that there was absolute non-existence—negation—of the effects of nāma and rūpa in a previous stage. On the contrary, all we can say is that while in a prior state nāmarūpa was not developed, in the present state it is developed. In this present state, both the nirguṇa Brahman and Māyā, being undifferentiate (nirviśesha), are blended indistinguishably together like "honey and its flavour inseparably mixed, the butter and its sweetness, the Ganges falling into, and remaining inseparably mixed with, the ocean, with its name and form dropped". Between Māyā and Brahman, in this asat state, there is a *svarūpa* or *tadātmya* relation: Māyā has no reality or svarūpa apart from Brahman. And, although in a "blend", the Brahman constituent in the amalgam still remains untouched and unaffected by Māyā.

The Māyā-asat world has no reality apart from Brahman; it is not an independent principle like the Pradhāna of the Sāṅkhya. Nor is it really different from and other than Brahman: it is Brahman as satkāryābhimukha, Brahman as about to manifest itself, as desiring to differentiate itself. None but Brahman can cause the unfolding of nāmarūpa.

"Unless there is an intelligent principle to control, how can there be brought about the unfolding of the world as nāmarūpas?", asks Kokileswar Sastri. "And this intelligent principle which sets the world in motion, being the cause of all modifications, is itself beyond modifications."[1] Māyā is, therefore, the creative power of Brahman. In its undifferentiated, causal condition it is to be regarded as indistinguishable from Brahman. It is real (sat) in this state; for it is not considered separate (anya) from Brahman. This is its sāmānyāvastha or universal aspect. But when māyā appears differentiated in the form of effect or vikāra, it is unreal (asat): for it is now viewed, from the human end, as different or separated from the Universal or Brahman. This is Māyā's *viśeshāvastha* or "particular" aspect which is the ordinary vyavahārik view of the world of nāmarūpas. In its sāmānyāvastha state the world is identical with Brahman and indistinguishable from it. But, when modifications of nāmarūpa appear, the world is accepted as something different and separate from the underlying, hidden

[1] Kokileswar Sastri, in *Vedānta Kesari*, Madras, 1931, p. 411.

universal, the Brahman. The world is then accorded a different value as a self-sufficient entity.

Modern Advaitins argue that while there must be some difference between the cause and its modifications in the form of its effect, there cannot be absolute difference between them. Yet in our avidyāvastha, under the influence of Avidyā (ignorance) in whose grip we always are, we look upon the particulars of nāmarūpa, the viśesha, as absolutely separate from the underlying universal or the sāmānya. We should not forget that even in our vyavahārik (empirical) view, all changes really stand connected with their sāmānya—the underlying hidden Reality.

It is not possible, therefore, to separate the nāmarūpas from Brahman which is the foundation on which they rest, without which they cannot be expected to last for any period of time. But that does not imply that the vikāras are in themselves unreal; only they are not to be conceived as something apart from the Reality, as self-existing and independent. Consequently to declare the world as unreal is to make it separated from Brahman, to make it anya or as different from Brahman, and to put it outside of Brahman. In that case the opposition between the world in time and space and the eternal Brahman would be absolute, and the Infinite would itself become finite.

Nevertheless, in the final analysis, Māyā is *anirvacanīya,* inexplicable, for it is a unique composite of that which is for ever changing and of that which never changes. The nāmarūpa element in world-existence is *parinami nitya* because it is liable to constant change: while the Brahman element is described as *kutastha nitya* because it is subject to no manner of change or transformation, forever at rest. Keeping these two kinds of nitya in view, the Vedānta makes Māyā the direct material cause of the world, while Brahman is indirectly the substratum of the world. There is the transcendent Brahman *behind* the Māyā which constitutes the material cause of this changing world of nāmarūpa.

When māyā emerged from Brahman, when the avyakta stage developed into the vyakta stage, it came out as universally pervading prāṇaspandan. In the Vedāntic scheme of creation the first manifestations of Māyā as prāṇaspandan, it is claimed, is known as *hiraṇyagarbha.* It held within itself what later developed into the external and internal senses and the five elements. The finite selves also derive all their elements of comprehension and action from this universal prāṇa.

It is true that the world of nāmarūpa is constantly changing; but what does change signify? The world of nāmarūpa is finite, and so incomplete; hence it is always changing to complete itself; it is moving towards something beyond it which would make it

complete. The world of nāmarūpa, therefore, is not merely what we describe as the natural: it is also supernatural: it is what it is and yet is not: not itself, because behind and beyond the "world" a transcendent and abiding element is ever present. Characteristic of every change, of every stage through which the world is passing, is a reaching out to something beyond. Therefore, every stage in world-history is what it is and also something other than what it is. Apart from this persistent supernatural factor, the world is nothing. Undergirding life is the inexhaustible (avyaya) nirguṇa Brahman.

"The term prāṇa is the world-seed, and the unknowable Brahman is defined as sat-Brahman in relation to and in identification with the prāṇa. This non-intelligent world of differences existed in the form of this seed out of which it is produced. It is this seed of prāṇa which developed or became manifested as this non-intelligent world."[1]

So that the world in its continuous transformations remains as it is; for its content is always the same, and in and through its changing states it preserves its identity of content. So the modern Vedāntin argues. Further, life is truly dynamic, yet it holds within itself a static soul, as it were, which transcends all motion, change or activity such as we associate with our idea of time and space. Life is thus at once relative and absolute. This is the central point which the modern Vedāntin wishes to stress through the doctrine of Māyā. Any social philosophy that does not take into account these contrary natures of life is sure to miss its mark, they claim. If life is taken only as a dynamic principle, an eternal flux through eternal time and space, it would become meaningless; change is not explicable without reference to Unchanging Reality. This unchanging element is called the spiritual principle of life, and the changing is referred to as the material.

Therefore, it is urged, since Brahman cannot be fully realized without a conception of the world adequate for the purpose, the Vedānta is "an attempt to conceive of the world as a whole by means of thought. To look at it with the attitude of aversion, to regard the world, therefore, as an illusion, never tends to the best results of right apprehension either of the world or of Brahman."[2]

The modern Vedāntin would say that the term Māyā conveys a characteristic Hindu attitude with reference to world-existence of which modern man seems unaware: that the world is only

[1] Kokileswar Sastri, "What is Maya and Why is it Anirvacanīya?" in *Vedānta Kesari*, 1931, p. 457.

[2] Professor Girindra Narayana Mallik, "Vishnuism and Modern Scientific Method of Philosophy", in *Vedānta Kesari*, 1939, p. 259.

Reality under disguise. In life, there is more than meets the eye. Just how it comes about that Reality assumes the guise of this transitory world with its "perceivers, perception and percepts, actors and action, enjoyers and enjoyments", joys and sorrows—cannot be explained by reason, but must be accepted as māyā.

"Herein lies the strength and the weakness of the theory", writes another modern apologete, "that in the world we see many things which cannot be explained satisfactorily, that the creation and process of the world seem to be altogether aimless, that our experience includes illusions . . . these tend to justify the notion that empirical life after all is but Māyā, a mixture of truth and falsehood, appearance passing for reality. Its weakness consists in its inability to explain itself, which perhaps is really a virtue. For true Māyā should not be self-explicable."[1]

Similarly, though māyā hides the truth from us, presenting a world of confusing plurality, it has given us also a mind. This is, perhaps, the most precious of all gifts; if man would but learn to use and control that mind, he can transcend all limitations placed on him by this very Māyā.

The modern Vedāntin, therefore, holds that "taken by the right handle", Māyā can be made to serve the highest purposes of man. The intellect, the imagination, and the will are among its invaluable boons. By the training of these faculties, by a course of self-less life and conduct, of inquiry and meditation, we might tear through this fascinating veil of Māyā and obtain a vision of Reality by which the final emancipation of the struggling spirit is accomplished. Power and wealth are sources of danger and disquietude to the selfless soul, but they are means of bringing relief and comfort to myriads of poor when rightly and freely used.

4

Two characteristic trends mark the development of Indian philosophy as it takes shape in India today, as it emerges from the travail through which orthodox Hinduism has passed and is passing. One tendency is to hold fast to the tradition of its own ancient past; the other is to graft on to the tradition the activism of the Occident. Modern Hindu thought veers by instinct towards a monistic interpretation of the universe; such a tendency has persisted throughout the whole Indian religious tradition; at the same time, it pulsates today with a new urge to activism, a drive

[1] K. A. Krishnaswami Iyer, *Vedānta or the Science of Reality*, Ganesh, Madras, 1930, p. 168.

towards active, social service. Whether these two ideals can be brought together into a living functioning unity, is still open to question. However, on the success of this attempted synthesis rests the entire future of Hinduism.

The change which has come about in the religious thought of India to-day compared with that of an earlier generation stands out in vivid contrast when we set side by side the Autobiography of the Maharishi Devendranath Tagore, for instance, and the letters and poems of his illustrious son, Rabindranath. The religious reformer of the Victorian age, who was intimately associated with the history of the Brahmo Samāj in its early beginnings, based his Brahmo Dharma on the thought-fabric of the Upanishads. Devendranath was a mystic. His life was spent in rapt contemplation of the One behind the Many. The world and its demands held no appeal for him. It held no call for active service. What supremely mattered was union with God. His son, Rabindranath Tagore, is also a worshipper of a God of Grace, but the solvents of advaita are more powerful in his poetic nature than in his father's more simply devout one. He desires "to rise into the bare infinity of God's uncrowded presence". "The *mantram,*" he writes elsewhere, "which gives our spiritual vision its right of entrance into the soul of all things, is the *mantram* of India, the *mantram* of Peace, of Goodness, of Unity—*śāntam, śivam, advaitam.*" These are representative of the intellectual inheritance of the contemporary Hindu, of what we may describe as his monistic outlook. The intellect of man, when it is awake, is always and everywhere occupied in an endeavour to reach a simplification of the complex of things. India, it appears, has been "in all its history possessed in a high degree of this instinct for philosophizing and has pursued its quest for the unity of all things with an almost unparalleled devotion".[1] One solvent of the *advaita* is the doctrine of Māyā, which, in its extreme form, would solve all the inequalities of life and the conflict of the moral and the natural orders in the universe, by denying the reality of difference and by affirming that only Brahman is real. All else is unreal; but not a mere illusion.

To Rabindranath Tagore, the world is the play of the Supreme Person revelling in image-making. If a man tries to find out the ingredients of the image, they elude him; they never reveal to him the eternal secret of appearance. "In your effort to capture life as expressed in living tissue," writes Tagore, "you will find carbon, nitrogen, and many other things utterly unlike life, but never life itself. The appearance does not offer any commentary

[1] Macnicol, "Religious Background of the Indian People", *Journal of Religion,* Chicago, vol. xii, pp. 317 ff.

of itself through its material. You may call it Māyā and pretend to disbelieve it, but the great artist, the Māyāvin, is not hurt. For art is Māyā, it has no other explanation but that it seems to be what it is. It never tries to conceal its evasiveness, it mocks even its own definition and plays the game of hide-and-seek through its constant flight of changes."[1]

So that the ultimate difference between one object and another is only that of a changed rhythm in regard to their particular situation and circumstance. Behind the scene is present the Artist who imparts an appearance of substance to the unsubstantial. The change or the rhythm characteristic of life is due to the movement generated and regulated by Divine harmony; it is the creative force exercised by the Master-hand of the Artist.

The reality of the world, then, lies in its relation to God. The fact that we exist has its truth in the fact that everything else does exist. The factuality of existence is not to be questioned. But man must probe deeper into what appears to realize actual being as of God. The "I am" in a man crosses its finitude whenever it deeply realizes itself in the "Thou art". In this crossing of the limit lies joy, the joy men have in beauty, in love, in greatness.

Tagore confesses that he cannot satisfactorily answer questions about the problem of evil, or about what happens after death. He confesses that he cannot satisfactorily explain the working of the law of karma and its consequent re-birth. But he is sure that there have come moments when his soul has touched the infinite and has become intensely conscious of it through the illumination of joy.

"I believe," he says in describing his philosophy of life,[2] "I believe that the vision of Paradise is to be seen in the sunlight and the green of the earth, in the beauty of the human face and the wealth of human life, even in objects that are seemingly [illegible] unprepossessing. Everywhere in this earth the [illegible] is awake and sending forth its voice. It reaches our inner ear without our knowing it. It tunes our harp of life which sends our aspiration in music beyond the finite, not only in prayers and hopes, but also in temples which are flames of fire in stone, in pictures which are dreams made everlasting, in the dance which is ecstatic meditation in the still centre of movement."

This is obviously the poet's interpretation of the creative spontaneity which is defined in Śaṅkara Vedānta in the comprehensive category of *līlā*. God's activity is acknowledged even in the realm of this māyā-world existence as pure self-expression,

[1] S. Radhakrishnan and J. H. Muirhead, *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1936, p. 42. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

in the sense that it is not constrained or determined by any conscious purpose. It is a Divine "play" which realizes itself from its very nature without subserving some other end. Tagore cites the example of art to explain the principle of creation. For, to him, the supreme moments of artistic creation afford, perhaps, the closest human analogy to what Śaṅkara meant by the Divine "play". These two are moments of pure self-expression which transcends altogether the category of conscious will or purpose, but which is at the same time rationally determined from within.

5

A more interesting development of modern thought in Hindu India follows the line of thought suggested by the concept of Śakti. The metaphysical theory of Śaktivāda is associated with the religious cultus of the worship of Mahā Māyā, the Great Mother, the Ādi Śakti of the Tantras. This worship was, possibly, in its origins, independent of the Brahma religion as presented to us in the Veda Saṁhitas and the Brāhmaṇas. But, in dealing with the origin and development of Tantrik cults we are largely in the realm of conjecture. We cannot adduce valid evidence to substantiate any one of the theories now current. There is, however, a considerable body of literature dealing with the Śakti cultus and religious philosophy; much of it has been interpreted to Western students through the arduous labours of Sir John Woodroffe and Pundit P. N. Mukhopadhyaya.

As it is now held, the Śakta doctrine affirms that "all is consciousness", however much "unconsciousness" appears in it. Woodroffe quotes Kaulācharya Sadānanda as saying in his commentary on the Īśopanishad: "The changeless Brahman which is consciousness (*cit*) appears in creation as Māyā which is Brahman as consciousness (*cidrūpāni*) holding within herself unbeginning (*anādi*) karmic tendencies in the form of the three guṇas. Hence she is guṇamāyi despite being cinmāyi. As there is no second principle these guṇas are citśakti."[1]

Śaktivāda is essentially a non-dualistic doctrine which holds that cit or consciousness, as the alogical whole, is the one reality. The concept of cit in this system, however, includes not only the spiritual principle in man which forms the static basis in which his universe of experience lives and has its being, but also that which *by* and *as* its own power (śakti) becomes or appears as the universe. Cit and its śakti, or the "power-holder" and its power are not to be considered as separate entities. They are to be

[1] The supreme Devi is thus prakāsha vimarsha samarasya rūpini.

regarded as one and the same alogical principle expressed in terms of human logic and viewed in the static and dynamic aspects of the Supreme as it appears to the pragmatic viewpoint of man. Śakti is really the Absolute Brahman appearing as His own object, and it transforms itself thereby into the worlds, both gross and subtle, without changing its essential nature. This change is effected through a process of "veiling" which consists in a system of "stresses and strains" that go to form specialized centres in the undivided ocean of Cit. At the head of all such centres stands the supreme *Bindu* or metaphysical point which is citśakti contracted in a point infinitely small but of massive potency, in readiness to evolve into the universe of forms, gross and subtle. In other words, the Bindu is the Perfect Universe in a condition of maximum veiling but of infinite potency. The transformation of the citśakti proceeds until the production of gross matter: in it hidden, as it were, the citśakti lies in a latent condition, a state that is generally termed as "unconsciousness". But matter is not really unconscious, all being the manifestations of citśakti. The so-called unconsciousness is nothing but a veiled form of consciousness. Liberation, in this system, therefore, consists in developing the power to see through this veil and in perceiving all, whether gross or subtle, conscious or unconscious, good or evil, as citśakti itself.

The chief difference between this system and the Māyāvāda lies in their respective attitudes towards the phenomenal world. The Māyāvādin's definition of transcendental Reality as changeless persistence in the three tenses of time makes him regard the world of becoming, which is characterized by change, as unreal. Śaktivāda, on the other hand, maintains that an adequate understanding of Reality should include all experience whether changing or changeless, temporar [illegible] that, if changeless persistence be taken as [illegible] the transcendental Cit of the Māyāvādin does not meet it. For the Māyāvādin, who has his own scheme for religious endeavours, his own view of practical methods to raise the veil of ignorance that hides Reality, must admit that there is a difference of condition between the Brahman of vyavahārik experience and the unveiled Absolute of the paramārthik realm. Of course, it is undoubtedly a difference that does not affect the Brahman as it is in itself. Still from "veiling" to "unveiling" or vice versa is a change of condition. To say that veiling and unveiling are both immaterial and unsubstantial is not to deny the change. In ordinary experience even a fancied change is an actual change of condition. Changelessness, more or less similar to what the Māyā Vādin ascribes to the parabrahman (cit) may be posited with regard to Śakti as well.

Further, when considered as a whole, and not in cross-sections, Śakti remains the same during the period of manifestation, and even at the time of dissolution it is still found to retain the capacity to resolve back to its original state.

Śaktivāda, again, contends that the Māyāvādin's concept of inscrutable Māyā involves a veiled dualism that goes counter to his essentially monistic doctrine. Māyā is either Brahman or not Brahman. If it be the latter, it is an independent reality, and hence involves dualism. If the former, Māyā and its products cannot be called unreal, since Brahman is the one reality, and it has Brahman as its basis. The world of experience is not, therefore, an "illusion". It is "limited reality", in the sense of being limited in time. It is real also in another sense, since the Vedas assert that the world-flow is beginningless and endless. Since the phenomenal world is also an experience and a reality, an adequate conception of the Transcendental must include that as well. The Māyāvadin's Brahman is not really a transcendental concept, but only the logical counterpart which human reason should necessarily posit as a permanent background for the changing world phenomena. Śaktivāda, which interprets the terms Absolute and Transcendental as meaning "exceeding or wider than relation", on the other hand, maintains that the really transcendental is the true and complete alogical Whole, the complete and the Perfect Given, which includes both Being and Becoming. Thus, according to Śaktivāda, the One and Supreme Reality is fuller than any definition which may be proposed. It is even beyond duality and non-duality. It is thus the Experience-Whole, the alogical. The Māyāvādin's parabrahman is an aspect of it: but not the whole.

This is the position of Śrī Aurobindo Ghose who seeks to evolve what he calls a "synthetic" Indian philosophy, a system of thought, that is, which will bring together the best of the classical darśanas of ancient Hindu heritage into a co-ordinated acceptable philosophic scheme which will be adequate to provide the generations to come with an attitude of life and towards life such as will be in accord with present world conditions of progress and achievement. Śrī Aurobindo Ghose is one of the many deeply religious minds within Hinduism who are seeking in many different ways to enable the Hindu to inherit the future without denying the past. As a sympathetic observer of modern religious movements in India[1] has remarked, the primary aim of modern Hindu reformers is "to enable its adherents to exchange ideals that have been passive, static, ataraxic" for others by means of which they may become . . . "canals of action in this world".

"Mahā Māyā", says Śrī Aurobindo Ghose, "is the Divine's

[1] Macnicol, *The Living Religions of the Indian People*, p. 127.

self-unfolding and manifested aspect. She is His manifesting energy, His active part. He is the Purusha and she is the Prakṛiti. He is the seed and she is the matrix. She acts, organizes, labours and fulfils his purpose to utter perfection. She is the sole executive force."[1]

"Endless self-expansion through the endless play of His delightful nature is His purpose. He plays the universe from the inconscient to the all-conscient spirit. Through the prakṛiti nature (Māyā), He plays, embracing all in His self, and nature works through eternity to fulfil Her Lord's Will. What we call the past, present and the future is a triple unity of the eternity, one eternal present extended from the past and extending into the future. Our births and rebirths are inevitable processes for Her progressive labour of evolution."[2]

Therefore, Aurobindo Ghose urges us to "see the world as His *līlā*. Work as God's worker, following His will in you for the establishment of His kingdom of Peace, Bliss and Beauty here. The world is God's temple, the play garden of His conscious force—an eternal Rasalīlā. . . . He plays all His creatures to Himself. This universal Drama of Evolution leads life through marvellous, multifarious scenes, from clod to plant, from plant to worm, from worm to beast, from beast to man and from man to God. . . . Such a life is not a dream, a mirage, a miserable phantom. It seems so to the divided mentality, for man has not yet embraced existence as an act in God's universal play. All that is, emanates from His Ānanda, has its being in His Ānanda and enters into His Ānanda. Knowing this you can live in the active, relative world the life divine. All life is the yoga of the Divine done in you by His supreme nature."[3]

6

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, who is perhaps the most outstanding interpreter of the Advaita at the present in India, though not a Śākta, has been at pains to prove in all his writings that the Brahman of Hindu thought is not a metaphysical abstraction but a living, dynamic spirit, the source and container of the infinitely varied forms of Reality. He holds that according to Upanishadic thought, Brahman is essentially *anubhava* or realization as *sacchidānanda*. Such a "blissful absolute" or "noumenon"

[1] Shuddhananda Bhārati, on the "Physical Reality According to Aurobindo Ghose's Synthetic Philosophy", in *The Scholar*, Pondicherry, April 1934, vol. ix, No. 7, p. 424.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 425.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 428.

is not a mere metaphysical absolute, unrelated to experience. On the other hand, it is the deepest and the most fundamental experience.

Developing Śaṅkara's suggestive idea of māyā in his own way, Radhakrishnan claims that the world as māyā is really indicative of the world as an historical process, the working out of purpose through various incomplete stages towards completion. This process, Radhakrishnan calls saṁsāra: in it each movement contains all its predecessors and is built on them. "The historical particular", says Radhakrishnan,[1] "reaches its end when it attains its destiny. Progress involves some objective to be realized, some purpose that is to be accomplished through change. Release is the realization of this ideal when the particular ceases to be bound to the historical plane. Moksha is freedom from historicity, or temporal process, or birth and death, which are the forms of time. Historicity ceases with realization."

Radhakrishnan points out, further, that Śaṅkara advaita does not necessarily imply that the jivātman is merged into the absoluteness of the paramātman when moksha is realized. Śaṅkara, it is claimed, really taught that released souls at the moment of release do not pass into the stillness of the Absolute but secure a steady vision of the oneness of all. The individualities will be dissipated only when the world process terminates.

This is, indeed, the teaching of Appaya Dīkshita, a later follower of Śaṅkara who argues in the last chapter of his *Siddhāntaleśasaṅgraha* that Śaṅkara allows the maintenance of individuality until all individuals are liberated. According to this later Vedāntic doctrine of sarvamukti or universal salvation, the freed soul attains to divine universality, but is strictly limited as a centre of action, although all his action is inspired by profound insight. He retains his condition of inner equilibrium in spite of changing external circumstances. But he will find existence in heaven intolerable so long as there is one single being who does not get there. Only when every historical individual gains his end, the world process is complete. The world escapes from the historical. History has meaning only so long as there is travail, the travail of the creative process. The consummation of the world purpose means the realization of all values. The world will not pass away until all values are realized. This would be when all historical particulars find fulfilment in the grand scheme of the whole which, strangely enough, is really a "self-destruction".

Radhakrishnan's definition of Advaita is contained in this

[1] S. Radhakrishnan, *Proceedings of the Sixth International Congress of Philosophy*, Longmans, 1926, p. 685.

significant passage: "An eternal purpose guides and informs the race to the highest good. All things are one in their being and origin, one in the general law of their existence, one in their independence, but each realizes this unity of purpose and being on its own lines. All mankind has one destiny which it seeks and increasingly attains in the progress and retrogression of the countless millions of history. The realization of this destiny is the end of the world when all beings and all worlds are resolved together in one equal and inseparable stillness."[1]

If Radhakrishnan were asked to explain the nature of the relation between God and the actual world process he would be inclined to agree with Śaṅkara that the relation between the Absolute Spirit and the changing multiplicity is incomprehensible. To him, as to Śaṅkara, the question is illegitimate since it assumes a distinction between the two. There is nothing other than the Absolute and yet the Absolute is not the mutable world. The Absolute is present in all things but unconfused. The world rests in God, but how exactly we do not know.

Therefore, to Radhakrishnan, as to a large number of the Hindu intelligentsia today, any attempt to explain the relation between God and the world leads to an *impasse*. To say that the infinite spirit creates the finite is to assume that the infinite spirit is attacked by the limitation of time. If God is regarded as the cause of the world, we will be faced with the problem of accounting for the origin of God Himself. It is difficult to know how the finite conditioned world is caused by an infinite conditioned Being. We cannot say that the Absolute manifests itself in the finite for the finite cannot manifest the Absolute. Nor can we distinguish between Being and its manifestation. If we say that the world is a transformation of God, the question arises whether it is a part of God or the whole of God that is transformed. If it is the latter then we have the lower pantheism which confuses God and the world. An evolving world will mean an evolving deity. If we say it is a part of God that is transformed, then we will have to assume that God can be partitioned. The issue will be then raised as to what is the nature of the unrealized residuum and that which is realized.

Radhakrishnan concludes that in the face of such complexity the most modest course for philosophers would be to admit a mystery at the centre of things. It is Māyā, mystery. "Let us hold fast both ends", is Radhakrishnan's advice, "and not try to find out where the lines meet. The real is the supreme spirit; the actual multiplicity is rooted in the real. How, we do not know.

[1] S. Radhakrishnan, *Proceedings of the Sixth International Congress of Philosophy*, Longmans, 1926, p. 687.

It is a mystery which we cannot penetrate and a wise agnosticism is the only rational attitude."[1]

7

In modern India there is also a school of the younger generation of Hindu thinkers who hold to a pragmatic idealism. They contend that "philosophy as a human pursuit ought to be no barren speculation but an illuminating vision of truth which inevitably prompts to self-culture and social service".[2] They see the desperate need in India for a new social philosophy which will meet new conditions and provide a new message of hope. They ask for fearlessness in thought and freedom from the tyranny of texts. They emphasize the moral as the ultimate principle in life, looking to Mahatma Gandhi as their ideal philosopher-saint who has propounded in his life and teachings a faith which may well provide the basis of a philosophy so revised as to bring out its bearing on life. Gandhi is not a metaphysician, but within the limits of his theism he has done what a metaphysician may be expected to do. But they are, nevertheless, highly critical of Gandhi's attitude towards life in general and towards life in the industrialized West in particular.

"Gandhiji's moral fervour and austerity evoke our deepest homage," writes Prof. Wadia, "but true morality must flourish not in the artificial atmosphere of studied simplicity, but in the busiest haunts of men. Genuine simplicity belongs to the heart and not to our mere physical environment. He (Gandhi) has forgotten the long aeons that the spirit of man has taken to rise above its animal origin and create bit by bit that mighty fabric which we call civilization. . . . More than others a great Karma-yogin like Gandhiji should realize the full significance of *homo faber:* man as tool maker. He is an essentially inventive genius and it would be wrong to put any artificial limits to his inventiveness. If in the fullness of time man has invented machines, he has not sinned against his nature, rather he has fulfilled it, for he has added to the fullness of life. . . . If we in India have to make good our boast that the spirit of India is so broad as to harbour in its bosom varied cultures and varied creeds, we cannot bar the way to industrialism. We have to assimilate it and transfuse it with the best that the culture of India can give. If the industrialism of the West is really wicked and soulless, it will not do for India

[1] S. Radhakrishnan, *Proceedings of the Sixth International Congress of Philosophy*, Longmans, 1926, p. 688.

[2] A. R. Wadia in *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, edited by Radhakrishnan and Muirhead, p. 362.

to turn her back upon it, but she must spiritualize it and this will be the test of her spirituality."[1]

As a consequence of the widespread influence of Western thought in India and the surprising fact that while the impact of the West has made itself felt in the realm of literature and science, yet it has failed to rouse any interest in the domain of philosophy, this school of modern thought also seeks to "synthesize the best in the Western and the Eastern thought".

To interpret Western influence on the Orient simply in terms of political freedom is to go astray in reaching a proper conclusion. The West, at the present, is profoundly affecting the desires of the East because in the West there are higher standards of living for the people and more material comforts. Consequently the people of the Orient are becoming fundamentally interested in improving their earthly existence; they earnestly want better homes and more comfortable standards of living and they are determined to apply themselves to the study and the discipline necessary. This is becoming increasingly so in India.

The influence of the West, then, emphasizes the necessity for developing a philosophy of objective reality. It may not be a self-conscious philosophy, definitely worked out—though that can be done—but basically it would mean that the people as a whole must consider the material world as real and must respect their individualities as real. That seems to be the basis of Western culture.

It may be that Ultimate Reality is, in the final analysis, subjective. At least it is not objective, much less materialistic. At the same time, there can be no such thing as mere matter: what is called matter is pregnant with spirit. Western scientists also seem to be moving to that same conclusion. But they do not refuse to build a bridge because the iron and wood used to construct it have no ultimate reality of their own. They do not say: "Iron and wood are only centres of energy called electrons without material basis: so why build a bridge and be under the illusion that it is real?"

What these pragmatic idealists would say, therefore, is that while it is true that Ultimate Reality is not objective, there is an objective Reality nevertheless; and according to the Western way of thinking, as the East takes it to be, it is not to be avoided nor suppressed. Rather, it is to be expanded, and made more rich and varied. And the Indian thinker is becoming more and more convinced that to move back from Objective Reality into the subjectivity or "super-subjectivity" of the Brahman while trying

[1] A. R. Wadia, *Presidential Address at the Sixth Session of the Indian Philosophical Congress*, pp. 25 ff.

at the same time to adopt and retain Western ways of progress is not possible.

To quote Prof. Wadia again: "Time has indeed come to re-think the basis of our life and to realize that the spiritual does not subsist in the air and in violent opposition to what is called matter, but that it subsists in and ennobles matter. The machine that is apt to be looked upon by the average Indian as the embodiment of materialism did not come to birth by itself Athena-like, but has come out of the immaterial thoughts—shall I say spiritual—of its maker. . . . Spirit is ultimate not as a dead, immovable carcase, but as living in the myriad forms of nature, ever showing new phases of thought and power, rich in light and colour, richer still in their meaningful soulfulness."[1]

And it is becoming increasingly clear that as long as India refuses to accept some such interpretation of life as this, so long will India remain the prey of her own over-emphasis on the Ultimate Reality of the Brahman as the only reality.

[1] A. R. Wadia, in the *Aryan Path*, iii, p. 675.

IN CONCLUSION

The results of our investigation can be brought together in four sections. There is, first, the history of the *word* māyā itself. From the very beginning of the history of religious consciousness in Hindu India, from primitive times on to the present day that term has been in unbroken, continuous usage. In the second place, there is the growth and development of the group of *ideas* which go to form what comes to be known as this *doctrine*. Though as a dogmatic assertion Māyā gains classical currency only late in the eleventh century of our era, these ideas were prevalent severally and in diverse combinations in Hindu religious literature from the period of the Ṛig Veda on. Thirdly, we must take account of the significance of using the word māyā as an accepted term to convey all that this doctrine has implied these many years. Why was the word māyā used to denote the Vedāntic *weltanschauung*? This leads us to discuss finally how recent trends of thought in modern Hinduism have created the need for packing the doctrine with a wealth of meaning-content, almost revolutionary to its original intention.

Even to-day, in everyday language, the word māyā means Magic: the Magician's art which claims to produce "things" with the aid of mysterious powers is called māyā. Such magical "power", so far as the ordinary man is concerned, "blindfolds" the looker-on. On the other hand, it also "creates" the illusion. These three factors: the mysterious power; the subjective delusion on the part of the observer; and the objective illusion of the trick itself; for all these the word māyā is used collectively as well as individually.

In the Ṛig Vedic passages we surveyed in the first chapter of this study, we discovered that the word māyā meant mysterious, inexplicable *power* used to perform supernormal actions. The "power" may be beneficent or malign. It was not merely magical but decidedly supernatural. Essentially, such power is impersonal, although it is manifested only in association with some concrete thing or person. Only as manifest in such concrete instances is Māyā distinguishable as either good or bad. The power (śakti) in itself is only potentially moral. In later passages, we noticed that the word māyā is used to denote the mystifying performance itself, particularly "appearances", forms, (rūpas).

In the earlier Upanishads also the term has the same meaning. At no place, however, is the illusion cosmic. Here māyā refers to certain facts of individual experience definitely connected with the religious idea of release. There is, indeed, a suggestion of subjective delusion (avidyā), but the term māyā is not directly

used in reference to it. The Upanishads provide the material for the study of the history of the *doctrine*, not the *word*, Māyā.

The Epics differentiate between three distinct aspects of the term māyā: the "power", the illusion and the delusion. The "power" element assumes, for the first time, a theological value which, we suspect, is due largely to Dravidian influence. The Epic period is an age of conflict between Dravidian and Aryan culture: the struggle of rival religious cults is one important feature of such a clash of ideas. Typical of Dravidian religion, even to-day, is to worship deities as personifications of some form or another of "energy" (śakti). As a result of the fusing together of several such deities there finally emerges in the Epics the Umā-Durga-Kāḷi cult. Thenceforth Kāḷi gains universal recognition as Divine Mother, the Primal Energy. The name Māyā is given to this Śakti, the Power, Creative Female Energy, which is made responsible for the actual creation, destruction and sustenance of the world. Kāḷi is worshipped as Mahā Māyā (the great Māyā) or Māyā Devi (the goddess Māyā).

In general, however, as we indicated by citing several instances of its use in Epic Literature, the word māyā means "trick" or "illusion". It is true that, in some of these instances, the connotation that Śaṅkara later gives the word may be read into it. But to attribute a cosmic application would be obviously far-fetched; the simpler meaning of "trick" or "delusion" does full justice to the context; it does not seem that in the Epics the word Māya is used in the same sense as in classical Vedānta.

In the Bhagavad Gītā, the epistemological factor of the subjective delusion which prevents the observer discovering the "trick" is first brought into prominence. The onlooker is "blindfolded" when the trick takes effect because he is subject to "ignorance", Avidyā. Such Avidyā in the Gītā is partly religious and partly philosophical. The individual is deluded about his real nature: he does not "know" that his real nature is that of Brahman Himself. Vidyā is this redeeming "knowledge" which is obtained by the practice of Yoga (discipline) leading to release from the round of births. But the word māyā is *not* used synonymously with Avidyā.

In the Śvetāsvatara Upanishad, which belongs to the same period as the Gītā, we find the word māyā for the first time in reference to the whole world. The world is a "magical appearance" due to the activity of the Divine Magician (Māyin). Here, again, we have no justification to give the terms Māyā and Māyin the meaning that the classical exponents of the Vedānta claim for them. In the first place, the Śvetāsvatara is a pronouncedly theistic Upanishad and therefore to give a strictly monistic

interpretation only to two verses of its entire contents, and without reference to the context, is unwarranted. In the second place, the simpler meaning that the world (prakṛiti) is the result of God's (Maheśvara's) mysterious "power" to create (not in the absolute sense, but in the sense of projecting out of Himself) is adequate in this context. Finally, had the writer intended to give us the impression that the world did not exist (except as an illusion), if that were his conviction, this would have been the right place for him to have said so. But he does not; neither here nor anywhere else in the Upanishad. All that we can claim is that the term māyā had gained currency by this time to signify the world as an inexplicable fact of experience, due to God's mysterious "power". What is conveyed by the term is not an explanation but an expression of baffled wonder.

There is no doubt, however, that Gauḍapāda in his Kārikās used the term māyā in reference to the world, definitely implying that it was an "illusion". Whether or not he was himself a Buddhist convert, he was considerably influenced by the outspokenly idealistic Buddhist speculation of his day. He agreed with the Buddhist ideal that the world was not independently real; but he could not accept their conclusion. The Vijñānavādin held that the world was only one's idea while the Sūnyavādin maintained that it was ultimately a "void", sūnya. Gauḍapāda avoids these conclusions only by desperately clutching at the Upanishadic dictum of the sole, ultimate reality of the Brahman and the Ātman. To him there is no doubt that the world is Māyā in the sense of illusion.

Śaṅkara followed. He gives classical currency to the word in the scholastic circles of the Hindu āchāryas. From his time on, māyā, as a technical term in Indian Philosophy, acquired a definite *status*: incidentally, it became the storm-centre of much controversy.

Śaṅkara intends the word to indicate that this multiform world is inexplicable. What cannot be "explained" is Māyā. It is a mysterious objective fact. Māyā is *nirvacanīya*, not to be conveyed through words. We might call this the "popular" aspect of his teaching. The second component in Śaṅkarite Māyā has a pronouncedly religious or theological (in the narrower sense of that term) consequence. If the core of the Upanishadic teaching is monistic, and if the burden of that monistic metaphysics related to the ultimate identity of the Brahman and the Ātman, whence this creative manifold? To Śaṅkara, Māyā was the "link" between the world and the Brahman; thereby God and the world were somehow related.

We know that Śaṅkara was a Śākta by birth and upbringing.

His own practical religion was largely centred in his devotion to the śakti of Īśvara rather than to Īśvara Himself. He addresses Lakshmi as the Queen of the Highest Brahman. The world, as well as the "I-ness" which ultimately causes external phenomena, is due to this Māyā śakti of Brahman. Brahman is not affected by this energy. Only we are affected by it. The whole world of becoming is projected as an appearance of the pure Being by Māyā śakti. Mayā is, therefore, a mysterious, inexplicable "power" of Brahman projecting this world out of Brahman itself, in such a way that the static perfection of Brahman's pure being is not in the least affected by this dynamic world of changeful Becoming.

Śaṅkarite Māyā conveys a third, no less significant, idea. The subjective psychic delusion on the part of the observer constitutes a *sine qua non*, if the trick (māyā) is to be in a real sense Māyā. To be objectively effective, Māyā has need of a subjective Avidyā. No wonder Śaṅkara uses the terms Avidyā and Māyā interchangeably. Avidyā does not only imply negatively the lack of the saving Vidyā-consciousness but also positively an illusion-creating fact in ordinary (vyavahārika) experience. This Avidyā-Māyā is cosmic, not only individual; it is inter-subjective; it comprehends the world in all its many aspects, including even the world's concept of a personal God. But it has no reference to the Absolute Brahman. For the Māyā world is ultimately only of this-side of life which is more of the nature of shadow than substance.

These three elements combined in the composite concept of Māyā to give the world a pragmatic value, but no ultimate significance. The world, for Śaṅkara, was not to be taken as a "void" or a "hallucination". Had he followed in the wake of the Buddhist Idealists of his day, Śaṅkara would have called his doctrine of the world by some other name than Māyāvāda. The world is not vijñāna (idea); nor is it sūnya (void). It is Māyā, possessing an objective existence for all practical purposes. To translate the word māyā, as Śaṅkara used it, as "illusion" is not doing justice to the fullness of his thought. Unfortunately, he has expressed himself so obscurely that at times such an interpretation seems valid. At any rate a goodly number of Hindu reformers of accepted orthodoxy understood him to have taught an illusion theory of the world.

The Vishṇuite Āchāryas assume that that was Śaṅkara's idea, that the world is an illusion, not merely relatively real. They claim that Śaṅkara taught that the world was "false" (jagan mithya), in the sense that it did not exist at all. This misunderstanding is partly the outcome of the unavoidable exaggeration sadly true of all religious controversy, and partly due to the

Vishṇuite theism that demanded a *real* individual being redeemed from a *real* world by a *real* God.

The defence of the Śaṅkarites is therefore directed toward maintaining the *positiveness* of the world-appearance. Māyā, they say, is inexplicable, mysterious Īśvara-śakti-caused world, which is not abhava (negative), illusory phantom, but a positive actuality (bhava) in the realms of everyday experience. It may have no abiding reality, but it is pragmatically valid. Brahman alone is real. This fourth element of *positiveness*, which possibly Śaṅkara did imply but failed to emphasize sufficiently, is brought out in the controversy over Māyāvāda after Śaṅkara.

2

No less than the word, the *doctrine* of Māyā also has had an historic continuity. Although first enunciated as a doctrine by Śaṅkara in the eighth century of our era, the ideas that he brought together had seen a long period of growth. The doctrine denies absolute validity to the world, because positively it affirms the sole reality of the absolute Brahman. It is based upon the age-long Upanishadic quest concerning the nature of the Brahman and the nature of the world.

Ṛig Vedic religion is primitive, composite and ritualistic. The Arya-Dravidians were still in the childhood of the race, and religion to them was more a matter of feeling than of thought. Magical charms, ritualistic cults, vague yearnings for religious relationship with the gods and primitive anthropo-analogical ideas about the universe prevailed. The naturism of the Aryan [illegible] with the animism of the aboriginal Dravidians, [illegible] vorship of the Aryan nature gods is gradually superseded by the magico-religious concept of "Vidyā". The primitive tendency to unify religious experience in terms of composite concepts results in the emergence of the idea of Brahman, to the making of which go four distinct elements: the magical "abstraction" of prayer (Brahman); the definitely theistic factor (Varuṇa worship); the primitive anthropo-analogical concept (Purusha); and the vague monism implied in the speculation in later Ṛig Veda about Being and Becoming (sat asat). The composite Brahman concept is not a unified whole, however; it holds together very loosely its component elements, all of which retain each its separate identity. One or other of these constituent factors may, at any time, become dominant, and invest the Brahman-concept with a characteristic meaning-content based on its emphasis. In the Brāhmaṇa period the ritualistic element,

which is ultimately magical, gives rise to the "mystery" notion of "identifications". The passion for identification becomes almost a religious obsession. The "Vidyā" religious knowledge of Brahman is considered as essential to salvation: Brahman is the Ultimate; to have "knowledge" of That is to become That.

This magical philosophy controls the thought of the earlier Upanishads. Ideation, as such, is assuming an importance in Hindu religious thought. Although there is no systematic exposition of the nature of the Brahman, it is held to be the Ultimate; and the individual ego is regarded as identical with it. The Vedic notion of Brahman as a magic [illegible] the anthropo-analogical picture of Brahman as [illegible] of the Universe, the primitive speculation about Brahman's nature as sat (the existent) in relation to a-sat (non-existent) still prevail; and the Upanishadic thinker is not sure how best to fuse these notions into a unitary concept.

Nevertheless, there is abundant evidence that it was the idea of the sole reality of Brahman which first dawned on the religious consciousness of the Upanishadic seer. His world is accepted as real; it has been projected by the Brahman out of himself in two characteristic ways: (1) by a curious self-bifurcation whereby Brahman splits himself into a male and female principle: together they produce the world; (2) by a religious sacrifice which involves a dismemberment of the body of Purusha, the cosmic man. Other modes of creation are also mentioned, which are obviously modifications of these two.

In the Upanishads, the practical quest for salvation, and final identity with the Brahman, are more important. The problem of the nature of the world does not seriously concern the Upanishadic thinker. There is, indeed, a crude analysis of states of existence with reference to man awake and asleep. But the object evidently was to prove the *oneness* of the individual self in deep sleep with the Eternal Existent. It was not intended to prove the unreal nature of human existence: at least, not in the Upanishads.

As we enter the Epic period we find that the idea of Brahman as the Ultimate Principle is firmly established, though not universally accepted. But its nature is not defined: at times it is personal; at other times impersonal. However, Brahman is the ultimate "cause" of the world, both *causa efficiens* and *causa materialis*. The Hindu mind already tacitly accepted three fundamental dogmas: the principle of Karma and transmigration; the idea of the world as periodically emerging from and receding back into the Ultimate Brahman; the doctrine of Moksha as release from transmigration. Henceforth the whole trend of Hindu thought is coloured by these beliefs.

The Epic period witnesses the active supersession of Dravidian cultural ideas over the Aryan, although the Aryan Brahman element still retains the leadership. In the realm of specific theological ideas, the new doctrine of Avatār ("descent") gains a firm hold on religious imagination, and it is generally accepted that God manifests Himself from time to time in many forms. This is one important doctrine that the Gītā teaches. Necessarily, then, the world is drawn nearer to God, and men become imbued with a spirit of mystic devotion to some one concrete manifestation of the Īśvara, through ardent worship of whom they hope to gain release from this Karma-world.

The Dravidian conception of the Divine as Energy, actively manifest in the world, and accessible to the faith of the religious devotion in the form of goddesses also acquires the sanction of Brahmanic orthodoxy. In consonance with orthodox procedure, these various devatās are assimilated into and identified with one another, so that there finally emerges the composite deity, Kāḷi. Kāḷi is the Primal Energy personified as the consort of the Eternal Brahman. She it is that periodically creates and destroys the entire universe. Brahmanic thought harks back to the Vedic cosmology where Brahman is definitely stated as having associated with himself a Female Principle of Creative Energy, and identifies this female principle with Kāli. In the weltering confusion of religious thought that was characteristic of the Epic period, the Kāli cult developed a vague "philosophy"—philosophy, in the sense of a system of rational explanations; and mythological accounts embodied in the literature of the cult. One main tenet of this "philosophy" was that Kāḷi, the divine consort of Brahman, was his Māyā (Power). She was ultimately responsible for this creative manifold. But the obvious relation between Brahman and the Māyā-created-world was too evident to deprive the latter of all validity. From the standpoint of religious values the world may be considered as of relative significance: but the world was *not* an illusion by any means.

When the period of the Schoolmen begins, Brahman as the sole ultimate Reality is firmly established as a fundamental tenet of the Vedānta. This is unquestioningly assumed. A second assumption is that the essential human self is of the same substance as the eternal Brahman. These are the two major assumptions. But along with these there is also assumed in the Vedānta: (1) that the universe is periodically created and destroyed after every aeon (praḷaya); (2) that the animate world is subject to the round of births and deaths that spell misery (Karma-samsara); (3) that the way out of this vicious circle of transmigration is the *practical* purpose of Vedānta.

The magical "Knowledge", Vidyā, as *ex opere operato* bringing about a desired end recognized in the later Vedic and early Upanishadic times, is now spiritualized and acquires the meaning of mystic rapport with the Brahman. When this Vidyā is attained the individual Ātman realizes its identity with the Brahman. The state of the individual self before this Vidyā realization is called a-vidyā. In this state of Avidyā the individual experiences manyness (nānātva). How is this accounted for?

The first of the Vedāntic Āchāryas to suggest an answer to this problem is Gauḍapāda. He follows the Buddhist analysis of the individual's experience of waking life, dream state, and of the self in deep sleep. In the last state, he claims that the self is lost in the Ultimate. In relation to this state of absolute perfection, of identity with the Absolute, waking experience was Māyā. Life, as such, has no meaning for the individual—no more than dream experience when one is awake.

> We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on; and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep.

Gauḍapāda as an absolute Idealist holds that Brahman, the absolute Being, alone is real; the Many do not exist metaphysically.

Śaṅkara sets out by describing Brahman as the Absolute which cannot be comprehended. Such an absolute, completely beyond reach of man's thought, is the sole ultimate basis of everything that is. It is absolute, static perfection, "realizable" only in the state of *Vidyā*. It has actively nothing to do whatsoever with this creative manifold. So far as the Absolute is concerned, it is not affected by this world. Man's true self is identical with this Absolute. In the here and now the individual is in a state of avidyā; he may experience life-events, but they do not affect his substantial Brahma-nature; they touch only his empirical self.

The world is Māyā, an appearance mysteriously caused and sustained by the *inexplicable energy* of Brahman, the Absolute, who is, nevertheless, not in the least affected by it. While we are in the state of avidyā (without the vidyā of identity consciousness) we cannot comprehend how the world is related to the Ultimate Being. In the Māyā-realm, space-time-causality relationships prevail and our sense-categories have validity. In the vidyā plane there is only identity. There we become identical with the Brahman. In the avidyā plane we try to think of him as the Īśvara, the empirical counterpart of the Absolute Brahman. The personal God is in the realm of Avidyā-Māyā; in fact, he is the product of it.

But Śaṅkara is very insistent that empirically the world is real.

All facts of experience have actuality within this realm of sense-categories. Īśvara may not be ultimately real, but all "vaidīk actions", religious rites, are justified, according to Śaṅkara, so long as the individual self has not realized its identity with the Absolute.

Śaṅkara draws a line between Being and Becoming, the One and the Many. Becoming is a mysterious "appearance" due to an inexplicable śakti (power) of Being. This śakti escaped logical and categorical determination. It is neither to be thought of as existent (sat) or non-existent (a-sat): that which is *sat* is permanently objective, identical with the Ultimate identity; that which is *a-sat* does not exist, nor is its existence conceivable. Māyā cannot be *sat*, for in that case it cannot be destroyed when the individual realizes its identity with the Ultimate; nor can it be *a-sat*, for then it would not be the *materia causa* of the world-appearance.

While the Māyā of the Śaṅkara is positive but not eternal, the Māyā of the school of Rāmānuja is both positive and abiding. It is the śakti of Īśvara who is Brahman. To the theistic Rāmānujites Māyā is the same as Prakṛiti through which the Paramapurusha (the Supreme Being) realizes his will and purpose as man does with his body. If Māyā has an epistemological influence, as Avidyā, it has the capacity to beguile men as to their essential kinship with the divine. This would be admitting that there is an element in the Māyā of the Vishṇuites that is contrary to the nature of the Brahman. Though the independent reality of Māyā is metaphysically denied in the theism of the Vishṇuite, there is a noticeable dualism which does not accord with the monism of the Vedānta. And in the system of Madhva it becomes pronounced.

To be consistent as monists we must either deny the Many or equate it in the One; we must either deny creation and the phenomenal world, or we must accept the creative manifold to be the self-expression of the absolute. Śaṅkara and his followers adopt the former hypothesis, while Rāmānuja and the Vishṇuite Ādhāryas adopt the latter. But as theists they have difficulty in accepting the logicality of inert nature as a possible expression of the Ultimate Reality.

In the homelier words of Śrī Rama Krishṇa Paramahaṁśa: "You see, so long as man is under the sway of Māyā, he is like a green cocoa-nut. If you take the tender part of it, you can't help scraping a little of the shell also with it. But the man who has gone beyond Māyā is like a ripe cocoa-nut. The kernel is free from the shell—when you shake it you hear it so. The soul then gets loose from the body. It is no longer attached to it." But the "Māyā-shell" has to be accounted for nevertheless.

3

To the student of the history of Religion the association of the word māyā with the group of ideas that finally result in the Advaita doctrine of the world is highly significant. For, at least in the growth and development of one major culture in the history of men, we are presented with evidence of the various stages through which an important concept of the primitive mind develops. That later subtleties of abstract thought are, after all, of humble origin traceable to primitive concepts is not surprising. A thing is what it is, and not what it came from. But it is often amazing when we pause to think how it comes to be what it is. If pre-Vedic Māyā is the same as Mana, a local variant of that primitive religious category, the meaning-content Māyā acquires in the various periods of Hindu literature surveyed in the foregoing pages of this study is of no mean significance.

Marett was one of the earliest anthropologists to claim that there was a pre-animistic chapter in religious genesis. Tylor's minimum definition of religion as "belief in spirit-beings" assumes a certain intellectual advance; it involves a more or less developed creed. Arguing on the basis of data collected from the religion of primitives and of people at a very low state of cultural development, Marett suggested that, prior to Animism, the primitive's religion might be described as "Supernaturalism". The primitive consciousness is awestruck by the feeling of mysterious, inexplicable "power", Mana. This "power" is felt to be neither good nor bad in itself; essentially it is impersonal, although it is recognized only in some concrete manifestation. Mana is a property, a quality and a state of being: persons and things in which Mana inhered were "power-full"; people possessing Mana had the capacity to perform superhuman actions; they were, therefore, feared. Negative Mana was *tabu*, for Mana had potentiality for good as well as evil, desirable to possess and, at the same time, to be approached with much precaution.

It was this same Mana-Supernaturalism that also gave birth to Magic. In this primitive state of mind, man makes no distinction between magic and religion. In both "persuasive" magic and "imitative" magic the element of belief in "power" such as the term Mana connotes is a primordial condition. There is no hard-and-fast line of demarcation between magic and religion; they emerge together in this realm of the Supernatural.

The word Mana is Polynesian. But the idea it conveys is found expressed by other names in different areas where religion is still primitive. The investigations of anthropologists show that despite variation, these several terms all share certain common charac-

teristics. The term mana itself is only of local application; among the Melanesians it meant mysterious "power". It has since been adopted as a scientific category in the study of the history of religion; as such, of universal application.

In the Ṛig Veda, the term māyā has the meaning of "mysterious power", which helps men and supernatural beings to perform actions that are supernormal. From this original meaning, inexplicable "power", is derived another; the term later comes to stand for that which is due to such power. In particular, "forms" (rūpa) and "appearances" which have no substantial basis that could tangibly account for their coming into existence, are referred to as Māyā. It is true that in its Ṛig Vedic use the term māyā has acquired a certain moral significance: it is "good" as well as "bad". But this moral connotation is only in the concrete. By itself the "power" is non-moral and impersonal. These are, indeed, characteristics significant of the comparative category of Mana.

Is Vedic Māyā Mana then? We might say it is a later development of an earlier concept, which we call for the sake of convenience pre-Vedic Māyā. This pre-Vedic Māyā would bear much closer resemblance to Mana. Vedic religion is still primitive, but it is composite; in the Ṛig Veda the Aryan naturism is more pronounced than the component Dravidian animism. After all, what we know of Ṛig Vedic religion we have derived from our study of the Ṛig Vedic hymns; and these were written by Aryan priests who are more concerned with the practical consideration of earning a livelihood rather than that of portraying the religious ideas current at that time. We have repeatedly drawn attention to the fact that Dravidian influence made itself felt on the Aryans from the very outset of the latter's settlement in India. Very little research has been done in the almost neglected field of the Dravidian element in the composite culture of early India. It has been generally assumed that Hindu culture is fundamentally Aryan.

It is very hard to maintain that the original Aryan naturism, which is certainly dominant in the earlier books of the Ṛig Veda, could by itself have led to the magical-philosophy of the Atharva and the Brāhmaṇas. In the survival-values of early Aryan religion that we still find in modern Parseeism we find no corresponding developments. On the other hand, in the recognizedly Dravidian religious cults of South India, we notice remarkable resemblances in the common trend towards animism and magic. Moreover, the concept of "śakti" (power) is still a marked characteristic of modern Dravidian cults. The term māyā is still used in the Dravidian vernaculars for the magic associated with

such cults, as well as for the simple art of magic. Even in the Vedas, Māyā (power) is of the Dāsyus and the Aśuras, and it is quite possible that it was taken over into Aryan Vedism, and applied as an additional attribute to the Vedic gods of the Aryans.

Pre-Vedic Māyā is decidedly Dravidian rather than Aryan. The very word points to such a conclusion. The traditional derivation given the term in Sanskrit is obviously forced. Sāyaṇa, in his commentary on Ṛ.V., I, 2, 7, derives the word from Mād *māne* (i.e. from √*mā*, to measure). Further on, while explaining the form "māyayā" in Ṛ.V., III, 27, 7, he derives it from √*ma*, to know, or to measure and adds—"mimīte jānīte karma mīyate anayeti vā māyā karmavisha yābhijñānam", i.e., (1) √*ma*, to know—by which the ritual, etc., are known, (2) √*ma*, to measure—by which the ritual, etc., are measured, i.e. understood, performed. On the face of it the derivation is far-fetched, though Sāyaṇa's usual explanation of the term māyā as prajñā, magical power, is more acceptable. In Vedic thought *Vidyā* and *prajñā* connoted "magical power". It is more probable that the word māyā is non-Aryan.

This Dravidian Māyā concept of "power" exercises a profound influence on later Vedic and early Upanishadic thought. Much of what Prof. Edgerton has recently called the magical-philosophy of the Upanishads is conditioned by this concept of "power". The terminology might be Aryan but the thought is the contribution of Dravidian culture. This seems to be curiously so, right through the history of at least one main line of development in Hindu thought—the Vedānta. Garbed in Aryan terminology, Dravidian animism is largely responsible for the Upanishadic desire to "know" Brahman, the essence of everything that is. For to "know" is to have "power" (śakti) over what is thus "known". It is difficult to conceive of this crude "mysticism" which is characteristic of the early Upanishads and the Brāhmaṇas as a natural development from the early Ṛig Vedic ritualistic cult where the whole religion centred in the ritual. The extraneous influence of the Dravidian Māyā concept is partly responsible for this deviation. Moreover, the arrested development of theism which was a pronounced factor in the Varuṇa cultus of the Ṛig Veda and the emergence of a pantheism, markedly animistic, in the earlier Upanishads is equally inexplicable unless we take into account Dravidian influence. The famous verse in Chāndogya (VI. 3) which is often quoted by classical Hindu mystics to proclaim the essential oneness of the self (Ātman) and the Brahman when translated with reference to the context would run thus: "What that subtle essence is, a state-of-having-that-as-its-essence is this universe, that is the real, that is the soul, that art thou (*tat*

tvam asi)." Such crude "pantheism" is more in accord with the prevalent survival-values in modern Dravidian religion than as a lineal descendent from the Naturism of the earlier Ṛig Vedic Hymns. It is certainly much nearer the concept of Māyā which we believe was Dravidian in origin.

Although Dravidian influence is detected in the later Vedic and the earlier Upanishadic literature the dominant note is still Aryan. But when we come to the Epic period we can see the battle of ideas at close range. The conflict of cultures is apparent. In the Epic narratives we find that Dravidian *mores* and social ideals have completely subjugated the Aryans. The conquered lead captive their conquerers. Particularly is this manifestly evident in the realm of religion.

The main thread of the development of the idea of Māyā śakti that we lost sight of in the period of the Upanishads we pick up again in the Epics. The "śakti" is universalized and personalized in Kāḷi. Kāḷi is the Mahā Māyā, the Goddess of Primal Energy. The very name Māyā is retained, and henceforth it is equivalent to the "power" of God, of God Himself as actively directing the affairs of man.

The contention that Mana and Magic have a common origin is validly proved by the fact that the local variant for Mana in Dravidian culture (māyā) is still actually used for Magic as well. And it is made quite clear that the common use of the term Māyā for Magic and the "Supernatural" (now meaning Divine) is because they are both primarily conditioned by the fundamental concept of "power"—mysterious power to bring about super-normal events.

Further, the suggestion that Mana might also be considered as the original germ of thought that later gives birth to the idea of God, the primordial "theo-plasm", is also borne out in the history of the development of Māyā in Hinduism. Very little research has been done in the field of Śāktism outside the work done by a few scholars like Sir John Woodroffe, which has been mostly in rendering the literature of the Tantras into English. But no historical treatment of the main doctrine of the Tantras, of God as Śakti (power) has been undertaken. It can be hardly maintained that the origin of the Śakti theology could be traced to the Vedas. Indeed, it is possible to read into Vedic and Upanishadic literature śakti ideas; but that does not warrant the conclusion that Śāktism is Vedic and fundamentally Aryan. The hypothesis that Śāktism is essentially Dravidian would be more reasonable, and its original germ of thought is possibly Māyā.

Indeed, it is from Śāktism that the term māyā emerges into prominence again in the period of classical philosophy in India.

Śaṅkara, we are told, was a śakti. We have reason to think that he was considerably influenced by the śākti literature of his day. Orthodoxy has probably expurgated the definitely Śakti element in his writings. In the purely devotional literature attributed to him we recognize significant glimpses of Tantrik theology; and in the Lakshmi Tantra referred to in our discussion of Śaṅkara's teachings it is passing strange that he should address Lakshmi as the chief Queen of the Parabrahman.

But why did Śaṅkara use the term Māyā? Following in the tradition of the Upanishads he also inherits the doctrine of Brahma Vidyā. Whatever "Vidyā" was in the period of the early Upanishads, in his days it meant mystic "realization" of the Brahman. The individual is the same as the Brahman, and the end and aim of life was to realize this identity. Vidyā is a *state* of ultimate being, Śaṅkara holds, where there is but Brahman alone. To the religious such a consummation is devoutly to be wished. The eternal round of births and deaths with its whole train of suffering, and the periodic emanation and destruction of this whole fabric of life in the universe would all be merged and lost in the static perfection of absolute Being. Vidyā is not this knowledge, but this state of consciousness when all is One. Brahma is this all. But as things are now in present experience it is evident Brahman is *not* all. That is so, according to Śaṅkara, because we are not in the state of Vidyā but A-vidyā. Avidyā is a state of consciousness when all this is not One but Many. In the state of Vidyā, Brahma is this world-all; in the state of Avidyā, Māyā is this world-all.

It is not often recognized that if Śaṅkara is rightly understood, his doctrine of Māyā is as much a doctrine of God (not of the absolute Brahman) as of the world. For in Avidyā we sense Māyā everywhere: in the final analysis God Himself, their personal Īśvara is Māyā. We can know God as Īśvara but we cannot know Brahman, Brahman is only realized in the state of Vidyā.

Even so, the world in its relation to the ultimate Brahman is Māyā. It can only be known as Māyā. In so far Māyā is an obstruction, because it effectively and potently (śakti) prevents our knowing the real nature of things, even the real nature of the Absolute. But since the Avidyā is cosmic, and not sporadic, all life is conditioned by it. It is a mysterious, inexplicable śakti which makes possible this world-appearance and *also* provides us with an "appearance" of the Brahman in Īśvara. Whether the English rendering "personal" and "impersonal" of the terms *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa, rūpavat* and *nirūpavat* is correct is open to question. But if the term "personality" implied "attributes" (guṇa) and "form" (rūpa) then, according to Śaṅkara, Īśvara through Māyā (God, that is in our state of Avidyā) is "personal".

In this sense, to later Vedānta, especially to Rama Krishṇa Paraṁahaṁśa and Vivekananda, God is Kāḷi and Mahā Māyā. The conception of God in the Vedānta is the direct descendant of the original theo-plasm of Māyā, the pre-Vedic Mana. And it is significant that it still conveys the idea that the ultimate is essentially mysterious; unknowable except as a power-appearance.

So with the world and in the world of men the "immanence" of Brahman's eternal nature as the Ultimate Reality is beyond all human understanding. Śaṅkara made it clear that in the state of Avidyā the world is positive (though not real ultimately). But his description of Īśvara as merely empirical, the distinction which he made between Brahman and Īśvara, as well as the term Avidyā being misunderstood to mean "ignorance" (as against vidyā as knowledge), leads to the notion that Advaitism as propounded by Śaṅkara decried everything else other than the Brahman as false.

Moreover, when Śaṅkara differentiates between Īśvara and Brahman and takes the attitude of agnosticism about the possibility of ever understanding how the world of men is ultimately related to the Brahman which alone is real, the lay mind hastily concludes that according to Śaṅkara life is a mere dream, a hallucination which has no substantial basis. And the controversy into which the Advaita Vedāntins were precipitated over the doctrine of Māyā, increasingly so with the rise of Vishṇuite Bhakti cults, led more and more to the popular notion that according to the Vedānta, the world was false.

4

Throughout the course of the development of the Vedānta, in all its varied forms, certain leading ideas continue to be normative. The development itself largely consists in growing adequacy of interpretation. The main consideration is to make periodical reinterpretation of traditional teachings to what seem opposing tendencies in contemporary life. The chief interest, however, was to show how the classical dogmas, at any period, emerge clarified and strengthened through the labours of devout interpreters. Such a frame of mind cannot be conducive to progress in its philosophic form. At best such an outlook only succeeds in seeking to vindicate that change does not vitally effect the permanent Vedānta conception of reality: not on the truth of the Vedānta.

The doctrine of Māyā may not necessarily mean that the world is an "illusion". But it is obvious that the nearer it approaches such an assertion, the more devitalizing is its effect upon activity

and, therefore, upon progress. Vishṇuite protest is mainly on that score. The contrast between the two realms of the *vyavahārika* and the *paramārthika* reality is made so decisive, in the Vedānta, that we can reach the higher unity only by passing from the one kind of experience to the other. When such a transition is effected the pilgrimage involves carrying little or nothing from the one sphere to the other. While it is easily accepted that progress in religious knowledge (vidyā) involves a transition from the common distinctions of everyday experience to the God-integrated point of view of the Kingdom of Eternal ends, it may be asked whether the Vedānta does not make this transition more abrupt than is necessary; at any rate, it denies the possibility of progress from the one to the other. It would be unfair to Vedānta to claim that by vyavahārika experience it means what we would call the modern scientific appraisal of everyday facts: rather, it is obvious that what is meant is the common-sense realism of popular approach to life. But admitting that the vyavahārika knowledge is inclusive of the modern scientific attitude, we should all agree that scientific categories are insufficient for the interpretation of reality. If we think of the two orders as separate in the same way as dreams are different from facts, and if the transition from the one to the other is so abrupt, the danger is always there of our being tempted to leave unsolved the difficulties which arise in the lower sphere. This is specially so where human values are concerned. All history would become meaningless.

Further, if the higher view of reality be so completely detached from the lower as to be altogether at variance, we are not in a position, through the insistent truth of God's abiding nature, to force the world of our day-to-day life to surrender its inconsistencies. Hindu thought, right through the centuries, has suffered from this handicap. The minds of men become oppressed by a general distrust of experiential facts and a lack of faith in the activity of reason as a possible means of progressive perfection. Consequently the only solution seems to be to adopt an attitude of passivity and indifference.

A similar difficulty arises in regard to the problem of progress in ethical achievement, or what may be called moral perfection. Here we are confronted with the fundamental moral dilemma in a specially disturbing way. The end does not justify the means, but rather annihilates the means. On the path of goodness and duty well done only a lower felicity can, at best, be reached. The goal which the pious man reaches is not the final consummation; he cannot carry his ethical gains with him into the ultimate state Not only is he, through the conception of Māyā, prevented from ascribing sufficient importance to the external sphere in which

his duties might be actualized, but these duties themselves, in their reaction upon his soul, do not bring him to the highest state. This is inevitable, because of the later Upanishadic assumption that action, if motivated by the individual self, is bound to involve it more and more in the mesh of Karma-saṁsāra. Such "release" (vairāgya) certain individual Vedāntins claim to have attained even in this life. The aim set before man is not *transformation*, but *release* from all that would bind him to *egoity*. But in such freedom the jīvan mukta, having absorbed moral rules unto himself, as it were, and transcending to some extent all ethical demands, may live as he pleases. It would be wholly unjust to see in this attitude a tendency to antinomianism or licence. But since the soul is ultimately conceived as unchangeable, it is essentially incapable of degrees of perfection. Activity and the progressive accomplishment of the good can only belong to the lower sphere; the highest ethical state and the highest condition of the soul must be held to be different from each other. The ideal does not certainly forbid endeavour so long as we realize that we only occupy the lower sphere; nor does it give man to hope that he can carry the results of moral achievement up to the level of spiritual attainment. In this attitude, the idea of progress is not unsupported; rather it is not sufficiently supported. This accounts, in the main, for the lack of ethical emphasis even in the Hindu Bhakti cults.

Consequently it would appear that the whole attitude which is associated with the word māyā is unfavourable to any vigorous belief in conditions of progress, and the goal is conceived in such a way as to diminish the importance of the process towards it. A dream-like character is cast over the whole movement, and we cannot look for any strenuous work or advance within a dream, if our minds are filled with the thoughts of awaking from it, and the only motive left to us is desire for such awakening and the resulting identification with the Divine.

However, as the later interpretations of the Vedānta show, particularly such as are being accepted by more recent thinkers in Hindu India, there are conceptions which show a return to a more realistic attitude—conceptions which admit the actuality and even the reality of the temporal process without being able to take it quite seriously. Such conceptions are those of *līla* and of cyclic process. It is contended that the Eternal Principle or God cannot be detached altogether from the world process, but God may be conceived of as released from any serious purpose in regard to it. His action in the world, instead of being the laborious working out of a continuous purpose, is unself-conscious, unstrenuous, and according to these conceptions, of the nature of

playful sport. The idea behind such a belief is that we must not constrain God to labour from a sense of need or attribute to Him an overwhelming desire to accomplish some definite task. He needs nothing and is not troubled with the burden of cosmic responsibility.

Even then it must be admitted that the conception is lacking in depth, and if it suggests, as it does, that there is only the minimum of purpose on the part of the Creator, it is hardly likely to increase the importance of the conception of progress.

Nor do we find much support for the idea of progress if we go further in the direction of realism, and analyse the conception of cyclic process. It is at best only a half-hearted concession to the idea, and it stops short just when we are expecting to have some success in the establishment of it. It is difficult enough to establish progress on the whole, after all those many periods of evolution through the ages. And if we are then told that this progress is merely within a recurrent movement and only a preliminary to an inevitable downward dipping of the curve, we shall be tempted to abandon the idea of progress altogether. For it is hard to struggle against the sense of final futility engendered by the idea that after all is done you go back where you started—even if it be after some million years.

Trends of thought in contemporary Hinduism indicate how unmistakably the march of events in world-life and Indian history have affected Hindu metaphysical theory. Perhaps there never has been in the history of Hindu India so revolutionary a change in the conditions of life and thought as this generation is witnessing. This is the culmination of a long process of the slow but perceptible influence of certain thought-patterns and life-ideals alien to the Hindu's national heritage. They have now taken by storm the time-old citadel of Hindu society. Every aspect of Hindu life is affected in an unprecedented way by the acceptance in practice of alien principles of conduct and life-outlook which are subversive of the basic assumptions of the religious theory on which Hindu India's thought-fabric is built. As a result, there is prevalent a new appraisal of religious values, manifest in the religious temper of India today, which seems to point away from the beaten tracks along which traditional Hinduism has so long moved.

This is unusual in India. Because so far all advance in Hinduism has been made through the interpretation and re-interpretation of its own basic, fundamental assumptions. At no time in Hindu religious history has there been felt any need for Hinduism to enunciate a system of thought radically diverging from the original propositions of Upanishadic orthodoxy. All systems of

Hindu thought which have come down to us in the form of the classical darśanas are entirely based on Upanishadic authority. And the various commentaries (bhāshyas) which were written from time to time by great teachers (āchāryas) like Śaṅkara, in justification of these systems, invariably went back to the Upanishads for explanation and support.

Since the beginning of this century, however, with the acceptance of certain thought-ideals and behaviour-patterns from the contemporary post-war world, a silent revolution has set in. A new Hindu ideology is in the making, with which it seems difficult to reconcile the orthodox postulates of Hindu religious theory.

For one thing, there has never been in Indian thought that conscious world-outlook which is so characteristic of much present-day Hindu-life. Everywhere, even in the remotest villages of the country, people are conscious of the fact that what happens elsewhere in the world affects conditions in India as much as what happens in their country tells upon the life of the world. Hindu India is not only ambitious to keep abreast of things and march along with the totality of world life; it is anxious not to lag behind and prove a dead weight upon world progress. This new world consciousness and feeling of akinness with the entire race of man is a new phenomenon in our intellectual life. This preoccupation with present world history and its making is strange to and irreconcilable with that Hindu thought which has more or less held in contempt the actual and the historical over against the ideal and the timeless.

The immediate effect of this "this-worldly" consciousness is not felt only in political life. It is creating the need for a new philosophical justification for the consequent social outlook of the Hindu intellectual. The feeling is growing that Indians are not only racially contiguous to the rest of humanity but that the basic interests of men in problems of economic justice, industrial readjustment, international finance, world peace and the like are not only fundamental to but identical with mankind. And every solution arrived at elsewhere for these vexed problems of human relationships and personality-values is watched in India also with eager interest. It is apparent from the writings and speeches of the younger leaders of Hindu thought and action connected with the Indian National Congress that they are very much attracted by current social theories. Their appreciation of socialism is genuine. The type of socialism that appeals to the Hindu mind is not the insipid variety which is satisfied with a few surface adjustments for the mitigation of superficial evils. It is a radical socialism which borders on Marxian communism aiming at a thorough reconstruction of world society, Hindu

society included; a reconstruction from within outward, making for a wholesome and unqualified recognition of man as part of the group, on the one hand, and for the realization on the part of the group of its obligations to the individual, on the other.

This recognition of social and human values, in view of all that has taken place in recent European history, is influencing India in two ways. One is the discovery of the value of man as man. As never before in Hindu history, the worth of the individual human being—though he might possess only the intelligence and outlook "of a cow"—is gaining recognition. The other is the conscious realization of the obligations of the socially privileged to those who are handicapped by the wrongs of society, ancient and modern. Hindu conscience has been quickened in respect of those oppressed by caste tyranny and enslaved by economic exploitation.

The consequence is a nation-wide awakening to the need for social service. All over the land fellowships have sprung up, based on the principle of corporate service to the under-privileged masses of the newly named *Harijan* (Children of God) community of the Hindu population, both in the rural and urban areas. These social service projects are carried on by groups of men and women in centres which are called āśrams, ancient institutions of traditional orthodoxy revived to fill an altogether different need. The āśrama ideal returned to popularity in modern India mainly due to the efforts of the Rāmakrishṇa Mission and the Ārya Samāj in the early years of this century. Many āśrams were then organized with a view to rendering social service on the lines of Christian missions in India and sometimes with a view also to counteracting the religious influence of these Christian service centres. Today the many āśrams in Hindu India are inspired solely by the ardent desire to gather together groups of disciplined individuals prompted by the ideal of service of man to man, in order to build up the solidarity and self-respect of the nation. A new purposiveness and co-operative search for a social ideal characterize these organized efforts of service for humanity.

One starts, then, with a new-found enthusiasm for the value of man as man. This is a strange doctrine to Hinduism. Whether from the standpoint of its religious philosophy or its ethics, in Hindu religious theory the human individual as such has never been given recognition in his own right. The individual personality as such does not ultimately exist. One must struggle through this present mortal life as best one can. A man is what he is because of what he was in his previous birth. The idea of personality, as we now conceive it, is the outcome of the modern science of psychology, inspired largely by the Christian doctrines of God and man.

The stupendous fact which conditions modern Hindu life is that the individual has come into his own. For ages in Hindu history the social fabric of caste has definitely decided the status of a man's life and circumstances by the mere accident of birth, conditioned by the principle of Karma. So that any man is born to be what he is because of what he has been; and being what he is, he is bound by the fetters of accumulated karma to live so that his present life is a working out of all the antecedents of birth. No individual can therefore consider himself free—free to express himself as he would; free to avail himself of opportunities of self-development; free to function in the light of ideals such as would perfect a society of individuals co-operating together for a common good. Belief in the principle of karma prevents all that.

And yet, in modern India a sudden desire for self-expression has completely overwhelmed over sixty millions of the Hindu community. For many centuries they had been condemned to a state of existence in which they were deprived of all possibilities of self-development by a social fabric which declared that they were what they were because of what they had been, and consequently, being what they were they should not seek to emancipate themselves. For all such attempts were bound to be futile. And to-day all thinking Hindus are agreed in taking active measures to free the outcastes, so long enslaved by religious orthodoxy, in order that an ideal state of society may be brought about. There are certain Hindu thinkers who try to show that the emancipation of the Harijan is reconcilable with the fabric of caste and with the principle of karma-transmigration which gives sanction to it. But the very fact that such an attempt is being made by orthodoxy indicates that from the standpoint of religious theory this revolutionary change in religious practice has to be justified.

At any rate, the present tendency in Hindu religious practice is to accept life as meaningful—meaningful to man. If there was not this desire to make life significant for each individual constituting the life of the Indian nation, by putting before him ideals of social solidarity, national self-sufficiency and economic betterment, there would be no point in the incessant struggle that is being waged in that country. National awakening, with all its corporate efforts to resuscitate and reconstruct the life of the villager and the outcaste, and to build up a state of society worthy of recognition among the nations of the world, is obviously directed and certainly energized by a purpose. The end is visualized in the minds of Indian national leaders as an ideal state of human society based on the principles of justice and respect for life. It is

being preached everywhere that such an end is not only worth striving for at all costs but also that it is an end which is well within the reach of every man even in this generation. That is why the national awakening in the country has led to organized effort based on a well-laid programme for the progressive realization of that perfect life.

In current Hindu thought, life is conceived of in terms not only of a struggle but of a moral struggle, in which the purpose is to realize the good in opposition to the evil. Is this not behind the Gandhian satyāgraha which makes it perfectly clear that in India's struggle for nationhood she should apply the principle of ahiṁśa? All violent methods are to be eschewed. As often as there have been sporadic outbursts of violence because immature minds are unable to comprehend the full significance of the programme of non-violence, the Mahātma has drawn attention to the need for closer self-examination and heart-searching as to whether even those who call themselves leaders of political thought and action in India have in their own lives realized the essential moral implications of the programme of satyāgraha.

The tremendous implication in the Gandhian philosophy of non-violence, however, is not so much the fact that it eschews all those methods of brutal warfare and cruel aggression that have characterized the imperialistic march of the Western world; it is, rather, the underlying moral principle that even in this life-and-death struggle of a nation, striving to overthrow the yoke of slavery unjustly enforced upon it for questionable ends and certainly by questionable methods, the war should be waged on a moral plane. In consequence a new meaning has been given to suffering. Not that suffering has not formerly been recognized as redemptive in Hindu religious thought. From time immemorial it has been held in India that suffering is one way in which man can emancipate himself from the bonds of Karma. Agonizing suffering, unflinchingly borne and unrelentingly inflicted, was certainly an accepted means of salvation. But to the modern Hindu, suffering, to be of redemptive value, has to be vicarious. Through such suffering it is believed that the ills of society can be healed and a new world worthy of human respect evolved. The satyāgrahist is ready to face any punishment because of this passion for righteousness.

With the words Ahiṁśa and Satya[1] inscribed on their banners, militant groups of Hindu intellectuals, forming fellowships for organized service, are battling for the redress of social evils and national wrongs. Not all this army of enthusiasts for the remaking

[1] These words are best translated as "respect for personality-values" (not merely of life in the abstract), and "righteousness" (not just "truth").

of man and the reinforcement of his moral energies are fully awake to the ideological implications of the comprehensive and radical social reconstruction they advocate and actually put into practice. These movements imply belief, to some extent, in the principle of human self-determinism. They also presuppose that this is a real world where there is conflict between good and evil. They hold to the hope that ultimately right must prevail over wrong, and that in the battle for righteousness moral weapons are to be used. These movements, again, are inspired by such a passion for social righteousness and such a firm conviction that right shall [illegible] that the underlying faith would seem to be in a purposeful scheme of life, which steadily makes for ultimate righteousness if only human strength can be harnessed to and augmented by the cosmic power making for righteousness. Not that such an ideology has been worked out. But it is in the making and will come to be, unless Hindu orthodoxy prevents its systematic expression, or "free thought" gains ascendancy in the mind of the Hindu intellectual and denies the need for any ideological justification for what works excellently in practice. At any rate, it is apparent that the ideological implications of the thought-trends in modern Hinduism are subversive of the fundamental postulates of Hindu religious theory, such as the belief in caste, karma-saṁsāra, māyā and the Upanishadic Brahman.

At no time has there been new recognition of the worth of the individual except on the basis of a new discovery of the meaning of God. In the same degree as man recognizes the purposiveness of individual life and relates human personality to a dynamic compulsion to fulfil its uttermost need for self-expression, to that same degree the idea of God is enlarged to include the distinctive values of personality. God is seen to have a purpose for the universe, so that the universe becomes meaningful in its turn. Meaningful, because the entire trend of history when read aright becomes the revelation of the purposeful working of the ways of God's will for the universe, effected through the instrumentality of the collective and individual will of man. This idea is alien to Hindu thought. At all times the speculation of Hindu thinkers has striven to make it clear that life in the universe, because of its changes, presents a sense of baffling discontinuity and that therefore it cannot be related to Reality, which is of its very nature abiding, changeless, eternal. However we may conceive it, the main doctrine of Hinduism with regard to the nature of God is that the Ultimate Reality is essentially impersonal. As such it is absolute, apart from the world, untouched by the happenings of the universe, in quiescent, eternal rest. But the

religious practice of the present times definitely posits a theism where God is conceived of as a personal Reality striving to fulfil His eternal purpose in this universe. The postulate, however, is neither framed nor recognized.

Can this divergence last? Is it possible for religious practice to strike out on its own account and develop a system of practical *mores* regulating actual conduct without a corresponding religious theory to justify its course and vindicate its position on the plane of thought? It may be for some time. But in the long run the corresponding re-statement of religious theory is inevitable, or the practice must recede. The evidence of religious history points to that possibility as inevitable, especially in a country such as India, where the justification of religious thought has all along permeated every aspect of Hindu life.

Thoughtful minds in Hindu India are not unaware of this impending necessity. In fact, this need was anticipated early in this century by Svāmi Vivekānanda, and the main purpose of the group of Hindu intellectuals whom he gathered round himself has been since then to work out such a restatement without jeopardizing the postulates of Upanishadic orthodoxy as developed by the later Vedānta in regard to the ultimate *ekatvam* (one-ness) of the *parabrahman* (ultimate principle), the final unity of the individual *jivātman* (being) and the *paramātman* (ultimate Being), and the consequent Māyā-relativity of this *nānātva* (many-natured) world of change.

To this line belongs Sir S. Radhakrishnan, who is attempting to construct such a restatement of Hindu fundamentals as to justify the modern Hindu view of life. He starts out with the assumption that there can be no programme of practical endeavour for human good which cannot be justified by drawing out more fully the deep-set implications of the postulates of Upanishadic religious theory. But it is equally possible that the new content of meaning is being read into them rather than drawn out of them. A critical examination of Radhakrishnan's interpretation of Hinduism leaves us with the impression that he is not so much re-stating and re-interpreting such postulates of Hindu essentials as to the nature of the Brahman, the principle of Karma-saṁsāra, the significance of the jivātman, the māyā-world of action and reaction, and the Hindu social fabric of caste-dharma, as only using these time-honoured religious terms associated so long with Hindu orthodoxy and packing them full of new religious values for which it would be difficult to find sanction in Hinduism itself. The neo-Hinduism of Radhakrishnan is Hinduism reborn—a new creation, not merely revived and reconstructed. And the fact that Radhakrishnan is labouring on the theological plane without

any definite and direct reference to the almost cataclysmic change which has overwhelmed Hindu religious practice to-day indicates that his is an effort to follow up what has already happened in the last quarter of the past century and the first quarter of the present century. Still, his attempted restatement of theory to justify the practice of yesterday is significant, in that it is prophetic of a religious theory yet unborn to justify the practice of to-day.

The ideological reconstruction of Hindu religious theory of to-morrow will be all the more revolutionary for yet another reason. The influx of the new social ideals now dominating the Hindu view of life has been initiated in recent Indian history by men who began their public life with no genuine conviction of the validity of the faith of their fathers. They possessed very little real knowledge of orthodox Hindu religious ideals. What they have since acquired by way of appreciation and knowledge of Hindu religious theory is obviously due to their contact with and personal admiration for Mahātma Gandhi and his religious convictions. And even Ghandhiji, whose religious position was symbolic of the period of transition roughly indicated by the first half of this present century, would have admitted that his own knowledge of Hindu religious theory was not based on specialized scholarship. It grew with the long travail of his experiment with truth. He reconstructed for himself a system of Hindu religious theory out of sections of the Gītā and other Vaishṇavite religious literature, demanded by the growing needs of the busy years of a life crowded with tense situations forcing him to strike out a practical programme of life. Gandhi was no qualified exponent of Hindu religious theory. He would fare ill in comparison with the other great modern reformers of Hinduism in the past century. That long line begins with the illustrious names of Raja Sir Rām Mohun Roy, Dwarkanāth Tagore, Keshab Chandra Sen, Dayānand Śarasvati and Svāmi Vivekānanda. They were men who spent practically the whole of their lives in acquainting themselves with all the Scriptures of Hindu orthodoxy, having acquired the necessary linguistic apparatus through the laborious process of painful study. They were men who might be said to have taken religion as a profession. Had they been members of the Christian Church they would probably have been accepted as theologians with a standing equal to that of a Martin Luther, a John Wesley, or a Karl Barth.

It is characteristic of the reform movement within Hinduism to-day that it is being inspired by what we might call "lay" leadership. And lay leadership is not always directed in its reform projects by an anxiety to conform with or to express violent

dissent from the fundamentals of the creed as such. The layman is only anxious to effect the necessary changes in religious *mores*. He is satisfied when such changes in religious practice have become generally accepted by the group. He is eminently pragmatic. Progress, according to the layman, is on the plane of action in the application of religious truth to the current conditions of everyday life, and in the actual pursuit of the religious life towards a recognized end. He is primarily concerned with methods rather than with principles, with practice rather than with underlying theory. So it has generally happened in history that when a practical programme for the religiously inclined has been worked out by the lay leaders of a particular religion, it has been with little reference to the theory postulated by the religion. But the time may come sooner or later when the divergence between practice and theory becomes so alarming that one of the two has to be modified to conform with the other. For it is not possible to act while believing the contrary; nor is it possible to believe while doing the opposite to what is believed.

The "professional" religious reformers of the last century in India have sought first to effect the necessary changes in Hindu religious ideology in order that the Hindu life-attitude and behaviour-patterns might be correspondingly changed. The founder of the Samājas of the previous century actually put down on paper, after much serious discussion, elaborate creeds which were to be the working bases of their faiths. Raja Sir Rām Mohan Roy and Keshab Chandra Sen, for instance, prepared a brief summary of the credal beliefs of the Ādhi and the Sadhāraṇa Samāj respectively. The Prārthana Samāj and the Ārya Samāj which also came into being about the same time embodied their beliefs in a specific creed, in their anxiety to make it clear just where they differed from current orthodoxy.

In this century also, if religious progress in Hindu India had been along the same lines as in the nineteenth century it would have been in the realm of thought and ideas as well as in practice. A new ideology would have been created, embodied in new creeds and expressed possibly in many Samājas. But in the present generation what has happened is that advance has been made mainly along lines of practical conduct. Svāmi Vivekānanda was partly responsible for this. He wanted to prove that a new ideological reconstruction of Hinduism was not needed to justify the tremendously far-reaching social changes which he perceived overtaking India like an avalanche. On the other hand, he himself believed and taught that Hindu religious theory was expansive enough to allow for and even justify all these modern social trends and reforms. He realized that creed-making led to critical

analysis of the religious values for which the postulates of Hindu orthodoxy stood. He discouraged introspection, in the sense of close self-scrutiny of the fundamentals. He encouraged an activism that need not bother itself about the creed, for the creed can be extended to envelop everything.

To the modern man the creed matters little, if at all. In a recent book one of them states the position thus:

"The problem may be briefly stated as follows: How can the Hindus be made vigorous, active and healthy members, instead of being the invalids, as they are now, of the human family? What national *risorgimento* can convert the helpless millions, whose contribution to human welfare is nil today and who keep alive on the intellectual charity of others, into partners in the world civilization? It is obvious that, constituted as the Hindus are, they are in no position to participate effectively in the shaping of human destiny. Before the Hindus can take their place with the civilized peoples it is necessary that they should bring their society in line with modern ideas and purge themselves of the numerous weaknesses which render them ineffective in every aspect of life."[1]

The question is, then, whether it will be possible for Hinduism out of itself unaided to produce from its founts of religious theory an articulate, reasoned system, an adequate creed as a basis of belief, which will provide the needed intellectual justification and spiritual drive for this new Hindu way of life.

There are three possibilities. First, the Hindu intellectual may decide to deny the need for any religious theory at all. He may argue that all the values which these modern movements demand are human values; there need be no superhuman value to which they have to be related in religious terms of dependency; moreover, the religious history of India seems to have demonstrated that religious values are of doubtful consequence and, indeed, have proved to be effective hindrances to social progress and the preservation of human values. Therefore, why any religion at all, Hinduism included? Such indeed is the belief of not a few Indian intellectuals to-day. It is not altogether true that the current secularism of the more sophisticated modern Hindu is the direct outcome of his contact with the tendency towards secularism and the open defiance of religious authority characteristic of modern Europe. To some extent it is indigenous.

The second possibility is that the Hindu intellectual may argue, without actually denying religious values, that one may outwardly conform to them and inwardly be indifferent, so that it does not matter what be the creed. In fact, there is no need for

[1] K. M. Panikar, *Hinduism and the Modern World*, 1938.

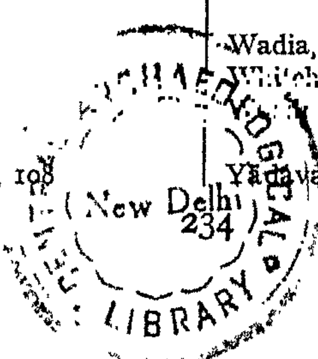
a creed at all. Let him that believes, believe; and believe what he likes. Only let us stand together in our fight for social righteousness. The modern Hindu, as in the case of Jawaharlal Nehru, is thus willing to accommodate himself to the "peasant mind" which may feel the need for belief in Ramrājya and superhuman resources to carry out the programme of the social Utopia. To the modern man, the need to act is more pressing than any barren speculation about doctrinal support for such practical reforms. Temples are being thrown open by social pressure and deliberate legislation, not by establishing the right of the Harijan to enter them on the sanction of the Hindu Scripture. So with untouchability. These are a few of the many new practices for which it would be hard to find religious sanction from orthodox religious theory.

The third possibility is that the Hindu intellectual may set about the restatement of an adequate religious theory. In Radhakrishnan's words, it would be a "dynamic rejuvenation." The original postulates of Hindu Upanishadic orthodoxy are indeed retained, but to serve an altogether different purpose, as containers rather than generators. The ancient Hindu religious terms are there, but they are given an altogether new meaning. The tendency now is to be didactic rather than critical; accommodative rather than defensive. New wine is being poured into the old bottles of accepted religious terminology. Meanwhile, the changes in the *mores* keep advancing fast. When all these present changes in life-outlook and social attitude have come to be accepted and established, as they will inevitably be, then will come the time for an articulate system of thought and the consequent need for the definition of those terms taken over from Upanishadic theory. Will these terms like karma, māyā and the like survive in the new religious atmosphere? Will the bottles hold? Or will new bottles be commissioned into service to contain the new wine, the old labels alone being retained?

In any case, it is apparent that in a real sense the days of Hindu orthodoxy, as we have known it so long, are numbered. The present is a time of renaissance, a rebirth, the coming into being of a new creation, the "dynamic rejuvenation" of Hinduism. It is the impact of modern thought and ideals, so very different from those of ancient India, which are transforming Hinduism from within outwards, setting us free and enlightening our minds to true values. The immediate task is to throw oneself heart and soul into the programme of the reconstruction of religious practice, changing the Hindu way of life, the transformation of Hindu society. The time is come when thoughtful Indians should realize the inadequacy of Upanishadic assumptions to furnish the living

inspiration and the theological theory which modern India must nee[illegible] succeed in her attempts to remodel Hindu life [illegible] less than the complete transformation of [illegible] logical conclusion towards which the entire process of the changes now prevalent in Hindu religious practice is leading.

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